Flags Of Our Fathers

written by

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based on the non-fiction
book by James Bradley
and Ron Powers

March 21, 2005

Dreamworks SKG and
Malpaso Productions

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OVER CREDITS:

We watch women's hands cutting, sewing, poking needles through thick cloth, as stars and stripes slowly reveal themselves.

FADE TO BLACK:

MRS. BRADLEY (V.O.)
I don't think there's a lot I can tell you.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
Did dad ever say anything about it?

INT. BRADLEY HOME -- DAY

Start CLOSE on a cassette recorder that turns on the table, then find JAMES BRADLEY, 40ish, and his MOTHER, a woman in her 60s.

MRS. BRADLEY
Once. I asked him what it was like. He just said...he wished there hadn't been a flag on the end of that pole.
(beat)
After he got home he didn't really want to talk about what had happened. But for five years, more...every night he'd wake up crying. The sound...it was like it was coming from somewhere so deep inside him. He'd try to stifle it, so he wouldn't wake me.
(beat)
And I pretended not to hear.

FADE TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK:

We hear the voice of Dave SEVERANCE. His voice has the rasp of a man who has lived through more than one battle.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
Every jackass thinks he knows what war is.

FADE UP:

INT. MCCANDLESS ZOBEL & BRADLEY FUNERAL HOME - CELLAR -- DAY

No one in sight; we glide low along the tiled basement floor, passing displays of caskets. *

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
Especially those who've never been in one. We like it nice and simple: good versus evil, heroes and villains. And there are always plenty of both. *

And into the hall, where we catch a brief glimpse of JOHN BRADLEY, 70, before he snaps off the basement lights and climbs the stairs.

SEVERANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But more often than not, they just aren't who we think they are.

Suddenly Bradley falters, collapses, barely catching himself by the handrail. His breathing is shallow and fast. A funeral home EMPLOYEE hears the fall and runs down from upstairs.

EMPLOYEE
Mr. Bradley? Mr. B, you all right?

Now we're close on Bradley's face, sweaty, eyes darting, confused, searching.

BRADLEY AT 70
Where is he?

EMPLOYEE
Where's who?

BRADLEY AT 70
Where is he?

EMPLOYEE
Just stay right here, okay? I'm gonna call an ambulance, it'll be okay.

The employee dashes back upstairs as Bradley continues to search the darkness of the basement for something lost deep in his memory. Tears well up in his eyes.

CONTINUED:

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
Most guys I knew would never talk about what happened over there.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTIGO HOSPITAL - ANTIGO, WI. -- NIGHT

JAMES BRADLEY, late 30s, bursts through the front door, ignores the front desk and mounts the stairs. Follow him up to the second floor and into the corridor. The camera waits there as he runs away from us to the far end, where the funeral parlor employee, James' mother and other family members stand nervously. From way back here we can't hear what they say, but they're filling him in on what's happened to his father.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
Probably because they're still trying to forget about it. They certainly didn't think of themselves as heroes.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVERANCE HOME -- AFTERNOON

It's a dark room, despite the afternoon light spilling through the window. James Bradley sits in the den with Dave Severance, a man slightly older than his father.

SEVERANCE
The heroes your dad and I knew are all dead. They died without glory, when the cameras weren't rolling....

CUT TO:

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE -- MARINES FIGHT TO TAKE IWO

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
...with only their buddies witnessing their bravery. I'd tell their parents they died for their country.

CUT TO:

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE - THE FLAG RAISING ON MT. SURIBACHI

The moving image we all know and the whir of the camera.

CONTINUED:

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
But to be honest, I've never been sure that was true. I know what kept us going. Our buddies. That's all that really mattered; the man in front and the man beside you.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON SAME IMAGE

Slowly turns from black and white to subdued color -- as the six young men walk away from the planted flag, light smokes, etc. Their names are Sgt. MIKE Strank (25), HARLON Block (21), FRANKLIN Sousley (19), IRA Hayes (22), RENE Gagnon (19) and Navy Corpsman John "DOC" Bradley (21). Franklin notices the cameramen.

FRANKLIN
Only time anybody takes my picture you have your ass in my face.

HARLON
Why you always standing behind me? Ever ask yourself that, Franklin? And real close, too.

Doc notices the cameramen in the distance, turns his back.

ANGLE ON ROSENTHAL, THE STILL PHOTOGRAPHER

and Sgt. Bill GENHAUST, the motion picture cameraman.

GENHAUST
You get it?

ROSENTHAL
I don't know. Wish I could've seen their faces.

CLOSE ON ROSENTHAL'S SPEED GRAPHIC CAMERA

as he pops out the roll of film.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - QUICK CUTS

In a tent near the beach, Rosenthal's hands pass the film to another pair of hands. Those hands drop the film into a shipping pouch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSENTHAL

shoulders his camera and exits....

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
There were plenty other photos taken that day, but none anybody wanted to see.

Rosenthal passes a trench lined with the bodies of fallen marines.

SEVERANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What we do in war, what we witness, the cruelty is almost incomprehensible. But somehow we need to make sense of it.

CUT TO:

THE POUCH

Loaded onto an idling seaplane. *

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
To do that, we need a simple, understandable truth.

CUT TO:

THE MAIL PLANE

takes off for Guam.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
And the fewer words the better.

CUT TO:

A LAB TECHNICIAN

pulls the negative from its chemical bath, inspects it.

LAB TECH
(to 2nd lab tech)
Film's ruined.
(wait)
No, there's one here.

He snaps the negative into an enlarger.

CONTINUED:

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
And if you can get a picture...

CUT TO:

A STACK OF PRINTED PHOTOS

Are shifted to the MILITARY CENSOR, who tosses out two of every three shots.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
A picture can win or lose a war.

He pauses on one -- we don't see it but can guess which one it is.

MILITARY CENSOR (O.S.)
You're gonna want to see this.

He hands it off to a man in the AP photo pool.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVERANCE HOME -- DAY

We notice James' CASSETTE RECORDER on the table, as Severance continues.

SEVERANCE
Look at Vietnam - the picture of that South Vietnamese officer blowing that kid's brain out the side of his head? That was it, the war was lost. We just hung around trying to pretend it wasn't.
(beat)
But this picture...

CUT TO:

THE PHOTO

snapped onto a drum by an AP MAN and spun, being wired to....

CUT TO:

THE STATES - THE HALF GLIMPSED IMAGE

is pulled off a drum at the other end by a copy boy's hands, and delivered to a photo editor.

CONTINUED:

PHOTO EDITOR (O.S.)
Christ.

He walks briskly into his editor's office.

CLOSE ON SIDEWALK - NEW YORK .

A stack of papers are dropped beside a newsstand, the photo above the fold.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
People went crazy over it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON NEWSSTAND - CHICAGO

A man hefts the Chicago papers onto his stand, same photo, different caption.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
It changed everything, maybe even the shape of the world.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A POCKET KNIFE - LOS ANGELES

The knife comes out of a pocket and cuts the twine off the LA papers, same photo, different caption.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
That sounds ridiculous, but it happened.

CUT TO:

A DELIVERY BOY - A SMALL MIDWESTERN TOWN

pitches a folded paper onto a walk, it's picked up by a man's hands.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
The country was bankrupt, people were becoming cynical and tired of war.

CUT TO:

INT. BLOCK FAMILY HOME - RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS -- DAY

A woman enters through the front door. We stay close on her hand until she sits, then we reveal her to be BELLE, Harlon's mother. She opens the paper and stares at it.

BELLE
Oh my Lord, that's Harlon!

BELLE'S YOUNG SON
Where?

BELLE
Right there! Planting that flag, that's your brother.

BELLE'S YOUNG SON
Ma, all you can see is his behind!

BELLE
And that's his. I powdered it and diapered it, I know my son. That's him. Go get your father.

The young boy rolls his eyes and heads off, calling:

BELLE'S YOUNG SON
Daddy, Ma's got a picture of Harlan's bum in the paper!

BELLE
You watch your mouth young man!

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE-- NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE HANDS of a young AIDE as he snatches the Washington paper off a desk and walks it down the corridor to the Oval Office, where he knocks.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
One photo, almost all on its own, turned that around.

The door opens and he passes the paper into THE HANDS of a Senior White House Official.

SENIOR WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL
Thank you.

CONTINUED:

The aide turns away. The Senior Official walks to the desk and hands the paper to FDR. We only see the president's hands as he unfolds the paper.

SENIOR WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
It's on the front page of every major newspaper; over two hundred dailies and they're all flooded with requests for prints.
(beat)
I think we might have found it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON WHITE HOUSE TELETYPE MACHINE

The senior official dictates as the operator's fingers fly across the keys:

SENIOR WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL
Transfer immediately to U.S. enlisted men and/or officers who actually appear in Rosenthal's photo of flag raising at Mount Suribachi.

CUT TO:

COMBAT - THREE MEN UNDER FEROCIOUS FIRE

A hand-held camera grabs bits and pieces of three men climbing steep terrain, DOC, RENE and IRA. Explosions come in terrifying bursts and from every direction. Ira looks to Doc, sees him breathing hard, sweating, eyes darting in search of the unseen enemy. Rene carries a flag. The three men make it to the top and plant the flag... and the pole punches through as if the earth were papier-mache and the sky bursts open as...

FIREWORKS crescendo in the sky above them, a MILITARY BAND strikes up and we pull wide to see no battle scene, but the three men standing atop a huge papier-mache mountain in the middle of a PACKED STADIUM - Soldier Field, Chicago -with people cheering and whistling and stomping and applauding. *

ANNOUNCER
(yelling over crowd)
Ladies and Gentlemen, the heroes of Iwo Jima!!

Rene takes his helmet off and waves to the crowd. Over the deafening roar, Ira shouts something to Doc...but his lips aren't in snyc with the word coming out:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRA
Corpsman!

DOC
...What?

But the voice comes from the other direction

VOICE
Corpsman!

Dazed, Doc whips his head around to see...

CUT TO:

IWO -- NIGHT

A flare explodes high above a badly WOUNDED MARINE, peeking out of a crater, calling for help. It's D-DAY plus 10.

WOUNDED MARINE
Corpsman!

IN A NEARBY SHELLHOLE

Doc and his buddy, Ralph "IGGY" Ignatowksi, a runt of a marine, are alone and under fire.

IGGY
Keep your head down, Doc!

WOUNDED MARINE (O.S.)
Corpsman!

DOC
I gotta go get him.

IGGY
Oh, no you don't.

DOC
Iggy, I gotta go, you--

IGGY
I have a whole different theory: he wants medical attention bad enough he'll come to you.

WOUNDED MARINE (O.S.)
Corpsman!

CONTINUED:

IGGY
SHUT UP AND CRAWL OVER HERE YOU LAZY SON-Of-A-BITCH!

DOC
Soon as that flare goes out.

IGGY
Crap. Okay, I'll go with you.

DOC
No.

IGGY
You actually gonna leave me here?

DOC
I'll be right back. Shoot some people. I gotta go.

And Doc dashes out without further conversation. Iggy throws his rifle over the edge of the shell hole in Doc's direction.

A slit in the ground opens up and starts firing at Doc.

Iggy aims at the slit and keeps firing till the hole closes back up.

IN THE OTHER CRATER

Doc leaps into the shell crater to treat the wounded Marine.

DOC (CONT'D)
It's okay, it's okay.

The wounded man keeps trying to stick his intestines back into his stomach, and they keep slipping out of his fingers.

DOC (CONT'D)
It's okay, I got that, I got that.

But he doesn't do much better. Suddenly a Japanese soldier comes screaming over the edge, bayonet aimed at Doc's heart. Doc somehow manages to pull his own knife. The two men struggle fiercely until Doc finally jams his knife hilt deep into the Japanese soldier's chest. As they hit the dirt together the soldier looks up into Doc's eyes, as if surprised he is mortally wounded.

JAPANESE SOLDIER
Help me.

CONTINUED:

Doc keeps his eyes locked on the soldier, as if trying to make a decision. Then he twists the knife and pulls it out. Blood gurgles from the dying man's chest as Doc returns to the wounded marine. He jabs a syringe of morphine into the marine's arm.

DOC
How's that feel?

WOUNDED MARINE
Feels real good.

DOC
I'm gonna go get a stretcher, get you to the beach, okay?

WOUNDED MARINE
I'm good. Help somebody who's hurt.

DOC
I'll be back.

As Doc goes up over the ridge of the crater he spots a MARINE running and jumping into the shell hole where he left Iggy. Doc quickens his pace as fire bursts around him, coming from rifle positions that appear out of solid ground. Doc dives into the shell hole. He looks, but Iggy isn't there.

DOC (CONT'D)
...Where is he?

MARINE
Who?

DOC
The guy who was right here. Ignatowski. Where is he?

MARINE
Maybe you jumped in the wrong hole.

DOC
I didn't jump in the wrong hole, he was right here! Where the hell did he go?
(calls)
Iggy! Iggy!!

MARINE
Shut up! You want every Jap on the island shootin' at us?!

CONTINUED:

DOC
Iggy!

Something drops from Doc's pack -- and it makes the sound of metal hitting wood. Doc looks down, clears away the dirt...and finds wood slats lining the floor of the shell hole. Stomps on it. A hollow sound.

FADE TO BLACK.

And over BLACK we HEAR the sound of dirt scraping against wood.

DOC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Iggy? IGGY!

The sounds and voices finally fade away.

FADE UP:

EXT. IWO - GREEN BEACH -- DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: D-DAY, IWO JIMA

Looking ten days fresher than when we last saw them, Doc and Iggy burst into the shot, manning a stretcher, carrying a wounded marine. They scramble up the far side of the steep slope of a bomb crater.

DOC
Iggy, lift your end! He's gonna slide off.

Iggy lifts the back end up to his shoulders. They get to the top and we get our first view of THE BEACH - and the fighting all around them. Everything is noise and confusion.

They get to the beach and ease the wounded marine off the stretcher. We now see the wounded men lined up in rows, waiting to be evacuated; hundreds of them, a staggering sight.

Doc, closer to the water, sees the dead bodies scattered on the sand, exactly where they fell. Four marines try and clear a path for the landing crafts to come through, but it's a huge job. Because right in the surf float dozens upon dozens of dead marines. Artillery shells explode around them as the big Japanese guns target the waves of landing craft backed up and waiting to get onto the beach.

Doc hears two men screaming on the nearest floating tractor.

CONTINUED:

ON LANDING CRAFT

LIEUTENANT
(screams)
Fuck you, get us on the beach!

TRACTOR DRIVER
(yelling)
I'm not driving over the bodies of Marines, sir!

LIEUTENANT
They're dead, you're not gonna hurt their fucking feelings!

TRACTOR DRIVER
Can't do it, sir!

Without warning the landing craft immediately beside them EXPLODES. The young driver changes his mind, guns the engine and the tractor roars up onto the beach...

OVER THE BODIES

of their fallen brothers.

IGGY

stands transfixed. Doc pulls him away.

DOC
Come on.

And they hustle back toward...

THE FRONT

A misnomer, as there is no front here, but it's where their platoon, 3rd Platoon, Easy Company, is pinned down in a trench under heavy cross fire, along with 2nd Platoon. The noise is unbelievable.

Franklin, usually calm, is freaking out. GUST holds the launcher as Franklin loads mortars as fast as he can, hitting nothing, trying to kill people they can't see while being shot at from all directions. Mike notices but says nothing.

Harlon finds Mike, screams something in his ear. Mike nods and signals the men to lay down covering fire. Harlon leaves his rifle, snatches several grenades and makes a mad dash for one of the pillboxes firing at them.

CONTINUED:

Doc and Iggy land in the trench beside Ira, who is firing at the pillbox. They watch in awe as Harlon gets right up to it, tosses in two grenades then hits the ground. A dust cloud rolls out as the grenades explode. Harlon leaps up and jumps....

INSIDE THE PILLBOX

firing wildly. He waves his hand in front of his face to clear the dust. Two Japanese soldiers lie dead on the floor.

BACK IN THE TRENCH

Mike calms Franklin.

MIKE
Franklin! Gust! Stop killing dirt, it's dead enough already!

FRANKLIN
If it's so dead, why's it keep shootin' at us?!

MIKE
Just wait till you see something!

GUST
Been here six hours, Sarge, haven't seen anything yet! How about you?

Harlon jumps in beside them.

HARLON
(shouts to Mike).
It's clear!

Mike hands Harlon back his rifle and nods to his immediate senior, Lt. PENNEL. Pennel and the 3rd Platoon's leader Lt. WELLS share hand signals and 3rd lays down covering fire.

Mike and Pennel lead the men of the 2nd Platoon out of the ditch and dash for the next trench. Halfway there they come under fire from the pillbox that Harlon just "cleared." The men find safety in the trench.

MIKE
(shouts to be heard)
I thought you said it was clear!

HARLON
It was!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE
That's good then, it means they're not shooting at us!
(calls)
Lindberg!!

Ira taps LINDBERG on the shoulder. Lindberg looks to Mike. Mike's hand signals tell Lindberg what he needs to do, and he twists a valve and lights his flame thrower.

IRA
I'll cover you, Ice!

LINDBERG
Don't cover shit! There's already enough people shooting, okay?! One bullet and this thing goes up like a roman candle!

IRA
Okay, no shooting!

LINDBERG
Spread the word!

He nods to Mike and Mike signals for him to go over the side. Mike, Ira and the rest of the platoon lay down withering fire as Lindberg zigzags towards the pillbox, falls on his stomach and lets loose the flames of Armageddon. From inside the pillbox he hears the cries of the dying Japanese.

BACK IN THE TRENCH

Doc and Iggy and the 3rd Platoon dive in to join the 2nd, just as a couple of big guns dug into the cliff face above decide to target them for annihilation. Ira shouts to LUNDSFORD in the next hole.

IRA
Is this a bad battle or what?!

LUNDSFORD
(laughs)
It's a fuckin' slaughter!

Lundsford disappears behind a puff of white smoke. Something hits Ira on his back. He turns over to see Lundsford's head rolling off. He bats it away.

IRA
Christ! Christ Jesus!

CONTINUED:

MIKE

turns as he hears an explosion from the rear.

ONE OF OUR TANKS

has finally made it up from the beach.

MIKE
Thank God!
(waves)
Over here!!

But the tank DISINTEGRATES before their eyes, a direct hit from a big shell.

THE MEN

are hit by hot debris.

EXTREMELY CLOSE ON IRA

as he clutches his helmet and closes his eyes.

Suddenly everything goes quiet -- then there is a piercing SCREAM and Ira opens his eyes and he's sitting in a...

SHELL HOLE -- NIGHT

...holding his rifle muzzle up, butt down in the dirt...and the SCREAM is coming from:

THE JAPANESE SOLDIER

LEAPING into the hole right on top of Ira, weapon drawn.

Ira SCREAMS as the Japanese soldier lands chest-first atop Ira's bayonet.

Now the Japanese attacker's scream is one of agonizing pain. Ira struggles to hold his rifle upright as the man hangs there above him, screaming, blood gushing, arms and legs outstretched like the spines of an umbrella. Ira squeezes his eyes closed again and...

RENE (O.S.)
Great news.

Ira opens his eyes and he's...

ON HIS BUNK - "THE WINGED ARROW" TROOP CARRIER -- DAY

--and over him stands Rene.

RENE
They're shipping us home.

IRA
Maybe if you live on Okinawa, cause that's where we're headed.

RENE
Not you and me. Capt. Severance asked me who else was in that picture and Christ if I could remember but it was Mike and Doc and Franklin and me and Hank Hansen. And I just remembered, you were there too, right?

IRA
I wasn't there.

RENE
'Course you were.

IRA
Neither was Hank, he raised the real flag. It was Harlon Block raised this one.

RENE
Shit, I told him it was Hank. If you weren't there, Mister Smart Ass, how'd you know it was Harlon?

IRA
You tell them it was me?

RENE
No, like I said, I just remembered--

IRA
Then keep your mouth shut.

RENE
They know there was somebody else, you can see it in the picture!

IRA
Then pick somebody dead.

CONTINUED:

RENE
They don't want somebody dead, you dumb redskin, they want to ship us back to the States!

Suddenly there's the tip of a knife under Rene's throat. Rene presses back into the wall.

IRA
It wasn't me; you hear that? I'm not going anywhere.

CUT TO:

INT. IDLING CARGO PLANE -- DAY

There are only a dozen seats on this plane and all but one are occupied -- every man highly ranked Navy or Marine brass. A timid NAVY LIEUTENANT boards the plane, looks around and approaches the lowest ranking officer, a COLONEL, his arm bandaged. He speaks softly in his ear. The Colonel doesn't take it well.

COLONEL
Who the hell says?!

The Navy Lieutenant speaks so softly we can't hear him over the idling engines.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
You gotta be fuckin' pulling my chain!

The Lieutenant speaks softly again and the Colonel unclips his harness and storms off the plane...

OUT ON THE LANDING STRIP (ENIWETOK ISLAND) *

...where RENE waits uncomfortably outside the door.

COLONEL
You wounded, son?

RENE
No, sir.

COLONEL
You take out a nest of Japs butt naked with your bare hands? Cause if I'm giving up my seat for a fuckin' hero, he better have a good fuckin' story to tell!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RENE
No, sir.

COLONEL
(in his ear)
Then enjoy it, cause they'll forget you before Christmas.

The Colonel walks off, passing Marine reporter and PR Officer * Keyes BEECH, who hustles toward the plane, bag in hand.

CUT TO:

BACK IN THE PLANE

Rene buckles himself in. Beech drops into the seat next to him and does the same, as the door closes and plane taxis.

BEECH
The sixth man, you got a name?

RENE
Sorry, still don't remember.

BEECH
Damn shame, cause I promised the Major you would know who it was. Fact, you not knowing throws a doubt on you being one of the flagraisers yourself, and since no one wants to be embarrassed, the moment you land they will turn you around and ship you back to Okinawa in time to meet your buddies on the beach. So, stop screwing with me and give me a god damn name.

Off Rene's look...

CUT TO:

EXT. TROOP SHIP - OFF OKINAWA -- MORNING

Men cram into landing craft, steeling themselves for the invasion. The camera drifts back to the ship and finds CAPT. SEVERANCE charging through the men, looking for someone. He spots Ira boarding the landing craft.

CAPT. SEVERANCE
You! Hayes! Get your red ass off that LC! *
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPT. SEVERANCE (CONT'D)
(as Ira scrambles off)
Make me look like I don't know what my own men are doing with a fucking flag the size of my mother's house, get to your bunk and pack up your papoose because--

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY HOSPITAL - HAWAII -- DAY

Establish.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WARD -- DAY

Doc Bradley sits propped up in bed, staring out the window, unable to take any joy in the sight of the too-blue sea beyond. An attractive young NURSE steps up with one of those smiles on her face.

NURSE
Can I have an autograph?

DOC
You got the wrong guy.

Slipping a folded newspaper onto his tray.

NURSE
That's what you said, but it's not just your profile anymore; now your name is in the paper, too.

On the front cover, the famous photo, annotated with names and arrows. The caption: "Flag Raisers Identified." She offers him a pen.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Just heard your doctor say we're postponing your operation; you're being shipped back to the mainland.
(as he reluctantly takes the pen)
Too bad.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO AS HE SIGNS

CONTINUED:

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
Everyone who saw that picture thought planting the flag meant victory, and that's all they wanted to know. Within a week of that photo being taken half of the men in it were dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF HANK HANSEN'S HOME -- MORNING

MRS. MADELINE EVELLY, Hank Hansen's mom, opens her door and bends to pick up the paper.

REPORTERS (O.S.)
Mrs. Hansen? Mrs. Hansen?

Bulbs flash. She looks up and sees several photographers and reporters at the bottom of her steps.

REPORTER
Did you know Hank was a hero?

CUT TO:

INT. HANSEN LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Hansen sits, newspaper in her lap, and weeps.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
But somehow being part of it meant something. Looking at it, you could believe their sacrifice wasn't in vain.

CUT TO:

INT. BLOCK FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN -- EVENING

The sun sets out back. BELLE Block sits in silence with her husband, ED, the newspaper on the table between them.

ED
I might have thought it was Harlan, too.

BELLE
It is.

CONTINUED:

ED
Belle, the names are right there. It's not him.

BELLE
And he would be alive and sitting here if it wasn't for you. Think about that when you look at his picture, Ed.

She stands and walks off, leaving Ed to stare at the photo.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - MANCHESTER, NH -- DAY

A crowd awaits, a banner declares: WELCOME HOME OUR HERO! The school band strikes up as they spot Rene, head poking through the compartment window, waving hard as the train pulls up. PAULINE, his girlfriend, elbows her way to the front of the crowd, making it to the train steps before it drifts to a stop. She clamors up to greet Rene with a kiss -- which seems to take him by surprise. Then she turns him to the waiting cameras and they pose and the bulbs flash.

CUT TO:

INT. GAGNON HOME -- DAY

Pauline sweeps Rene into the room as if she already owned the place. Rene's MOTHER brings up the rear, closing the front door, obviously no fan of Pauline's. The radio plays in the living room.

PAULINE
And I need to rush home and change because there's the governor's banquet and then the parade; imagine, the governor coming here to meet us...

MOTHER GAGNON
Shhhh!!

And now we can hear the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
President Franklin Delanor Roosevelt has died....
(etc./actual broadcast)

Almost instantly the phone rings. Mother Gagnon answers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER GAGNON
Hello.... Yes, of course. No, we understand, it wouldn't be right.

The look on Pauline's face is hard to describe, but it's as if she is trying to comprehend a great, personal loss.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRIFFITH STADIUM - WASHINGTON, DC -- NIGHT

Out on the field we can hear them warming up for a night game. Doc and Rene wait in the tunnel making small talk with three Senators. Doc turns and sees Beech approaching with Ira, in his dress uniform. Ira makes a point of avoiding eye contact with Rene.

BEECH
Here he is! Senator Boyd, Senator Robson, Senator Haddigan, I'd like you to meet Private First Class Ira Hayes.

1ST & 2ND SENATORS
Proud to make your acquaintance, son. / Damn good to meet you.

3RD SENATOR
(proudly)
Pappoo gomma sush medyaha!

IRA
...sorry?

3RD SENATOR
(even prouder)
Pappoo gomma sush medyaha! That's Pima Indian talk, boy, don't you know your own language?
(good natured)
Took forever to memorize the damn gibberish.

IRA
Sorry, I been away from the reservation too long, Senator.

Ira and Doc shake hands. Rene offers his hand, Ira slips him an index finger instead. Only Beech catches it.

CONTINUED:

BALLPARK ANNOUNCER
Ladies and Gentlemen, we have some visitors today...

3RD SENATOR
That's you.

BALLPARK ANNOUNCER
Please welcome, the Heroes of Iwo Jima!!!

BEECH
Go-go-go!

They reluctantly step out onto the sidelines and are hit by a bright spotlight and thunderous applause as the crowd leaps to their feet. The announcer continues with their names but you can't hear him. The band finally strikes up The Star Spangled Banner and the applause turns into thousands of rousing voices.

The boys, completely overwhelmed by this reception, can barely keep their chins from falling open. Doc and Ira look more horrified than proud.

RENE (V.O.)
Holy shit.

CUT TO:

THEIR POV - THE VOLCANO ON "CAMP TARAWA" - HAWAII -- DAY

Rene, Doc, Ira stare up at the foreboding face of the volcano.

RENE
They expect us to climb this?

DOC
Or something just like it.

They are joined by Mike, Harlan, Franklin and other members of the 2nd and 3rd platoons. As usual, Mike wears his helmet cocked to one side.

FRANKLIN
So, where you think they're sending us?

MIKE
(straight faced)
Think it's the desert, Franklin.

CONTINUED:

FRANKLIN
That makes no sense at all.

MIKE
It's psychology. When they train you for the desert they always do it on a volcano.

Mike leads the way.

FRANKLIN
Now you're just having fun with me.

MIKE
Harlon, take four men right and watch for Bedouins.

FRANKLIN
(as he follows Harlon)
What's a Bedouin?

HARLON
It's a guy with a camel.

FRANKLIN
Jeez-Louise, maybe we are going to the desert.

The 3rd Platoon fans left. Mike guides the 2nd up the hill, he and Harlon showing them how to work as a unit, under:

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
They took that hill at least a hundred times.
(now watching Harlon work with the men)
Harlon was Mike's second in command, a natural athlete. He and every other Senior on Weslaco Panthers Football team enlisted in the Marines on the same day. Being Seventh Day Adventists and conscientious objectors, this was a terrible disappointment to his mother.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - CAMP TARAWA -- NIGHT

They've been training for weeks now and most of the men are filthy and exhausted, save a few, like Rene, who always looks perfectly groomed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A poker game is in progress, everybody antes cigarettes. Over to one side Doc cuts Rene's hair (which is considerably longer than in the last scene). Harlon practices tilting his helmet in the mirror.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
He wanted to be just like Mike in every way.

FRANKLIN
(watching intently)
You tilt that to the right, what if the bullet comes from the left?

HARLON
Bullets don't come from the left. You know any left handed Japs?

FRANKLIN
That makes about as much sense as you showering with your shoes on. You don't even know why you do it, do you?

HARLON
Because I won't tell you means I don't know?

FRANKLIN
You do it cause Mike does it; I'll ask him.

Franklin crosses to join the poker game, passing Doc and Rene. Rene appears nervous as Doc clips away.

RENE
So you cut hair back home?

DOC
Some.

RENE
You training to be a barber, are you, Doc?

DOC
No. Just studied it a little.

RENE
But not in barber school?

CONTINUED:

DOC
Nope.

AT THE POKER TABLE

Ira rakes in a big pot, Lindberg tosses in his hand.

LINDBERG
Chief, I had very little to do with Sitting Bull's death, so maybe you can stop taking it out on me.

IRA
Different tribe. The Pima's fought on the side of the white man.

GUST
See, now that is smart.

IRA
Yeah, it worked out real good for us.

Lindberg leaves the table, Rene takes his spot, spooked.

RENE
Dead bodies. He cuts hair on dead bodies.

FRANKLIN
Even I knew that.
(dealing)
Who's in?

WITH DOC

Iggy, by far the smallest man in either platoon, takes a seat in Doc's chair.

IGGY
It must be easier with them not moving and all.

DOC
There's that.

IGGY
You know what I been thinking? They been telling us we need to buddy up and I thought we'd make good buddies.

CONTINUED:

DOC
And how did you think that?

IGGY
Well, in that we have a lot in common. So, why do you cut dead people's hair anyway?

DOC
I'm studying to work in a funeral home.

IGGY
You tell a lot of people that?

BACK AT THE POKER TABLE

LUNDSFORD
You're shitting me. You seriously chose the Marines because they had the best uniform?

RENE
No sense being a hero if you don't look like one. Jacks.

IRA
Queens.

RENE
You do anything else on the reservation but play cards, Chief?

Ira gives him a burning look as MIKE enters the tent with a clipboard.

MIKE
Listen up. We practice going over the side tomorrow, which means we aren't long for this piece of rock.
(applause and hoots)
So, any man who doesn't have his masturbation papers yet better sign up by tomorrow night or he isn't going overseas.

GUST/HARLON/LUNSFORD
I'm good. / Got mine. / I'm square.

Doc says nothing, hides his smile.

CONTINUED:

HANK
(reading on his bunk)
Still got mine from Tarawa.

FRANKLIN
Wait, why am I just hearing about this?

MIKE
Jesus H, Franklin, do I have to repeat everything twice for you?

FRANKLIN
I didn't hear nothin' 'bout no masturbatin' papers.

IRA
Heard they were running short.

GUST
S'why I got mine first day here.

FRANKLIN
(standing)
Nobody tells me nuthin, real nice, guys!

MIKE
Get your ass over to the officer in charge of records, maybe there's some left. Leave your money, I'll play for you.

FRANKLIN
Thanks, Mike.

MIKE
(taking his chair)
And if he tells you you're an idiot, you take it like a man, but don't leave without signing them.

FRANKLIN
(running out)
Appreciate it, Sarge.

MIKE
(to Rene)
Gagnon, what the hell happened to your hair? You look like a corpse.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S.S. MISSOULA - OFF CAMP TARAWA -- MORNING

The deck of the attack transport vessel is crammed with Marines. Carrying their full packs, Easy Company practices going over the side of the tall Troop Ship to the small LVTs bobbing ferociously in the big waves. Doc and Iggy step to the rail and look over the edge. The inexperienced Marines twist and hang on the constantly shifting nets. Doc looks green.

IGGY
Just keep your eye on the man below you, that's all you gotta look at.

And as if on cue, the man in front misses his footing and plummets into the ocean. Those on the LVT make a grab for him as he surfaces.

IGGY (CONT'D)
Watch me, just watch me.

Iggy goes over first, sure footed as a goat.

IGGY (CONT'D)
See, no big thing.

Doc reluctantly throws his legs over and climbs. Iggy guides his foot. They make it to the LVT below as another man falls and disappears below the waves.

MARINE
He isn't comin' up! He isn't comin' up!

Men pull off their packs and dive in to try and save him. No luck. The bubbles disappear.

TIME CUT:

EXT. EXTREME WIDE SHOT - THE ARMADA -- NEXT DAY

As the armada pulls out to sea.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S.S. MISSOULA -- DAY

Rough seas. A lot of Marines hang out on deck, throw up, marvel at the armada, and speculate about their destination. Hank Hansen spots Doc at the rail, offers him a smoke. Doc accepts.

CONTINUED:

DOC
Thanks.

HANK
How's your stomach?

DOC
Great.

HANK
Your pop was in the navy, right?

DOC
My best friend and I got our notice the same day. My dad told his dad we should join the navy; said we'd die clean and on a full stomach.

HANK
Didn't figure on corpsman, huh?

DOC
Nope.

HANK
You know any Japanese people?

DOC
No.

HANK
I do. Real nice people.
(beat)
After the battle on Guadalcanal, we spotted some Japanese survivors on this little scrub island. They'd thrown away their weapons, clothes were shreds, waving any kind of white thing they could find. So my buddies hop in an LC and go over to rescue them. They hit the sand and the Japanese pull out machetes and hack them to pieces while we watch. We strafed the beach, killed every last one; they knew we would. To them, that was an honorable death. Shit, maybe they're right, I don't know anything about honor, but I know if you see an enemy soldier in pain and you try and help him, odds are good
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HANK (CONT'D)
there'll be nobody around to help your buddies when they need it.
(re: cigarette)
And if you think that's gonna help your stomach, just wait until we hit some waves.

Hank pats Doc on the back and walks off; is hailed by a buddy.

HANK'S BUDDY
Hank! Hank, come here!

Doc looks out at the big waves tossing the ship about and wonders what real "waves" look like.

GURBER (V.O.)
Come on in!

Doc turns toward camera, as if he just heard that.

DOC
Sorry?

CUT TO:

INT. SENTINEL HOTEL - WASHINGTON, DC -- NIGHT

Bud GURBER, PR man from the Treasury Department, welcomes the boys into the posh hotel suite. Gurber is 40s, probably sold cars or vacuums before coming to the service, he might be the fastest talking man alive. Beech follows the boys in. *

GURBER
Come in, come in! Bud Gurber, Treasury Department. *
(to Beech)
You showing the boys the sights?

BEECH
Saw a hell of a ball game.

GURBER
Great.
(to all)
Bars there, help yourself. Got some briefing sheets for you here, just simple things we want you to say, mostly "buy bonds," can't say that too often; itineraries, those are
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GURBER (CONT'D)
changing every couple of minutes, everybody wants to meet you guys, got women sending up envelopes with stockings and notes written in lipstick, THAT we won't mention to the press, am I right? Have a drink for God's sake!

Ira pours two Scotches, hands one to Doc, leaving Rene to serve himself.

GURBER (CONT'D)
My God, what you guys must have seen over there; I've been watching the newsreels, Jesus Christ that was a fight and a half.
(notices Doc studying the itinerary)
So, we got a hell of a lot of money to raise and not a lot of time.
(re: itinerary)
White House tomorrow, then we trot you over to shake hands with a couple hundred Congressmen who won't pull a penny out of their pockets -- politicians and actors, put them in a restaurant together, they'd die of old age before picking up the check -- then it's New York City, Time Square, dinners with various hoi polloi, and then Chicago--

DOC
(reading/concerned)
Who are these "Gold Star Mothers"?

GURBER
That's what we're calling the mothers of the dead flag raisers; you present each of the mothers with a flag, they say a couple of words, people will shit money it's gonna be so moving.

DOC
This says Hank Hansen's mom.

GURBER
Lovely woman, she knows how close you and her son were, he wrote home
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GURBER (CONT'D)
about you, she is so looking forward to meeting you.

IRA
Hank wasn't in the picture.

Ira stares at Rene, who buries his head.

GURBER
...I'm sorry?

He looks to Beech, who shrugs, but clearly knows something.

IRA
Hank didn't raise that flag, he raised the other one, the real one.

GURBER
The real one?
(accusingly, to Beech)
There's a *real* flag?

DOC
Ours was the replacement flag. We put it up when they took the other one down.

GURBER
Am I the only one getting a headache here? You know about this?

BEECH
It was after it was already in the papers, the mothers had already been told....

GURBER
Oh that's beautiful! This is beautiful, yeah, why tell me? I'm only the guy who has to explain this to a hundred and fifty million Americans.
(yells)
Who is in the God damn picture?! Are any of you in the God damn picture?!

IRA
Yeah, we're in the God damn picture.

CONTINUED:

GURBER
(livid)
Six guys, raising a flag over Iwo Jima, victory is ours, you're three of them, right?!

DOC
Victory? It was the fifth day, the battle went on for thirty five more!

GURBER
(yelling)
What did you do?! Raise a goddamn flag every time you stopped for lunch?!

IRA
(to Doc)
Can I hit this guy?

GURBER
You know what? I don't give a shit! You're in the picture, you raised the flag, that's the story we're selling here, boys.

IRA
Are you deaf? Hank isn't in the picture! Harlon is in the picture!

GURBER
Who the fuck is Harlon?!

IRA
Harlon Block. That's whose mother should be there, if anyone's mother should be, this whole damn thing is a farce, you ask me.

Bud slumps into a chair. Silence. Then calmly:

GURBER
You know what they're calling this bond drive?
(points to poster)
The Mighty Seventh. That's your picture there. They might have called it the "We're Flat Fucking Broke And Can't Even Afford Bullets, So We're Begging For Your Pennies" bond drive, but it didn't quite have the ring.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GURBER (CONT'D)
They could have called it that because the last four bond drives came up so short that we just printed money instead. Ask some smart boys on Wall Street, they'll tell you our dollar is next to worthless, we borrowed so much. And nobody is lending any more. Ships aren't being built, tanks aren't being built, machine guns, bazookas, hand grenades, zip. You think this is a farce? You want to go back to your buddies? Well, stuff some rocks in your pockets before you get on the plane, cause that's all we got left to throw at the Japanese. And don't be surprised if your plane doesn't make it off the runway, because the fuel dumps are empty and our good friends the Arabs are only taking bullion. If we don't raise fourteen billion dollars, and that's million with a B, this war is over by the end of the month; we make a deal with the Japanese, give them whatever they want and we come home, cause you've seen them fight, they sure as shit aren't giving up. Fourteen billion. The last three drives didn't make that much all together.

(beat)

People on the street corners looked at that picture and took hope. I don't know why, think it's a crappy picture myself, can't even see your faces. But it said we can win this war, are winning this war; we just need you to dig a little deeper. They want to give us that money; no, they want to give it to you. You don't want to ask for it, you don't want to give them hope, you want to explain about "this person" and "that flag"...that's your choice. Cause if we admit we made a mistake, that's all anyone will talk about, and that will be that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And he let's them sit with that; Rene cowed, Ira simmering, Doc torn and uncomfortable.

CUT TO:

INT. SENTINEL HOTEL - BANQUET ROOM -- DAY

Tons of press yelling questions to the three boys on the dais. Beech and Gurber watch.

REPORTER #1
How's it feel to be heroes?

DOC
(with humor)
You've got the wrong guys, we just carried a pole.

REPORTER #2
Ira! How many Japs were shooting at you when you raised the flag?

IRA
None.

REPORTER #2
Come on, don't be modest.

IRA
We're not.

That puts a pall on things pretty nicely.

CUT TO:

INT. SENTINEL HOTEL - KITCHEN -- DAY

Gurber slams through the door and leads the boys through the kitchen toward the back door.

GURBER
Sold a lot of fucking bonds today! "No, nobody's shooting at us, we just carried a pole, keep your money!" This ain't the way it's gonna work, boys!

And he bangs open the back door.

CUT TO:

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - THE ARMADA -- DAY

Two arrowheads point west as the fleet from Australia joins the ships that left Hawaii, making the armada 800 strong.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S.S. MISSOULA -- CONTINUOUS

Doc, Hank Hansen, Iggy and almost every man aboard crowd the rails, waving, whistling and cheering their new neighbors. A dozen yards away, a Marine perched perilously atop the rail slips and falls overboard. Screams of "man overboard" are heard as Hansen runs to call the bridge.

The Marine bobs to the surface and waves that he's okay. A cheer goes up. The men at the rails start cracking jokes with the poor slob.

LINDBERG
(yelling)
Hawaii is that way!

Several life savers are tossed, but the tethered ones fall short of their mark.

GUST
Keep paddling! We'll catch you on the way back!

The jokes die down as the ship keeps moving and the man gets further behind, drifting into the path of the giant supply shift just aft.

GUST (CONT'D)
Hold on, they'll lower a raft!!

LINDBERG
Swim away from the bow! Away from the bow!

Hank returns to the rail, his face stone.

HANK
They're not stopping for him.

IGGY
What?

HANK
None of them will. They can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The men at the rail sense what's happening and fall to silence as they watch the Marine drift further and further away.

DOC
So much for no man left behind.

Doc turns away from the rail.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPT. SEVERANCE'S QUARTERS -- NIGHT

Mike stands. CAPT. DAVE SEVERANCE, not much older than Mike, sits, trying to get through paperwork.

SEVERANCE
I've had to make a few other changes. I'm promoting you to platoon sergeant.

MIKE
I appreciate that, Captain, but I promised my men I'd see them through this.

SEVERANCE
That your James Cagney impression? Cause I've heard better.

MIKE
I'll keep practicing, Cap.

NB: At no time does Mike attempt any kind of impression, just his normal speaking voice.

SEVERANCE
This isn't your first time through this, you don't need to prove anything. You're not the best sergeant I've had, but you're the best that's still walking. Block's a good man--

MIKE
Yes, he is.

SEVERANCE
-- the men know him, he can step right in. I *have* actually thought this through. And platoon sergeant puts you further away from the bullets. We have a term for that in the Marines, it's called a good thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE
I'd like to, Cap, but I gave them my word I'd bring them home to their mothers. Which means I've already lied to half of them, can't lie to the rest.

SEVERANCE
That's no better at all.

MIKE
It's why I get the women's roles in all the plays; don't have the voice.

Severance nods, reluctantly agreeing.

SEVERANCE
...How are your men?

MIKE
They'll do fine.
(beat)
...Gagnon.

SEVERANCE
The movie star?

MIKE
He's a good man, but he might be more use a little further back from the line.

SEVERANCE
I'll use him as a runner.

MIKE
Thanks.

And he leaves Severance with his problem.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. MISSOULA - BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

Big maps line the walls. Detailed topographic maps of Iwo marked "Secret" unfurl on the oversized tables, including maps that show Iwo in relation to the other islands under Japanese control and Japan itself. Four marines carry in a 3D model of the island and put it down.

COL. Chandler JOHNSON (40ish) and Captain Severance stand at the front, briefing the first three platoons of Easy Company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LT. PENNEL (2nd Platoon) and LT. WELLS (3rd Platoon) sit with their men.

COL. JOHNSON
Our target, "Island X," is an ugly, smelly, dirty little scab of a rock called Iwo Jima.

Franklin throws Mike a "dirty" look. Mike shrugs.

COL. JOHNSON (CONT'D)
It means Sulfur Island, which accounts for the smell. It looks sort of like a burnt pork chop, you ask me. After 20 straight days of bombing you won't find a blade of grass or twig on it, and it wasn't that pretty to start with. Captain?

CAPT. SEVERANCE
Iwo is just five and a half miles long, two and a half wide. This lump down at the bottom is Mt. Suribachi. On your maps in front of you the island is white.

White like hell, the maps are almost completely covered with black dots and symbols.

LT. WELLS
(joking comment)
Not much of it.

CAPT. SEVERANCE
The black dots represent known enemy emplacements.
(pointing out)
Coastal Defense Guns, Dual-Mount Dual-Purpose Guns, Covered Artillery Emplacements, Rifle Pits, Foxholes, Antitank Guns, Machine Guns, Blockhouses, Pillboxes and Earth Covered Structures.

Someone lets out a whistle.

LT. PENNEL
I don't see any barracks or other structures.

CONTINUED:

CAPT. SEVERANCE
That's right. And we don't really know why.

LT. WELLS
Dumb question, Captain, but why attack it at all? Why not just sail on by and go straight for Japan?

COL. JOHNSON
(indicates on map)
We've been bombing Japan for nearly six months now. Our B-29s take off from the Marianas. Most of the way they fly unescorted, because our P-51s don't have the range. Iwo is almost exactly halfway to Japan and directly in their path.
(pointing out)
Antiaircraft guns, two landing strips and enough zeroes to give us some serious headaches. The radar on the island gives the mainland defenses a two hour early warning, so things get even hotter on that end. And those bombers that aren't downed have to face the same fighters on the way back. We're losing two out of three planes.
(beat)
We take this island and those airstrips are ours. B-29s can land, refuel there, change crews and discharge wounded. And squadrons of P-51s can cover them all the way from here to the Emperor's palace.

CAPT. SEVERANCE
And the Japanese are well aware of its strategic importance, hence the fortifications. And this isn't just any island to them. This isn't Tarawa or Guam, Tinian or Saipan. This is Japanese soil, sacred ground. 12,000 Japanese defenders in 8 square miles. They will not leave politely, gentleman. It's up to us to convince them.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPT. SEVERANCE (CONT'D)
(beat)
The good news is, the Army planes have been pounding the hell out of it for 72 days.
(for emphasis)
They've dropped 6,000 tons of bombs.

Even the most skeptical listener is impressed.

CAPT. SEVERANCE (CONT'D)
And when we get there, our ships' guns are gonna pound 'em for ten days more before any Marine sets foot on their stinking soil. With any luck, we'll just have to mop up the stragglers.
(pointing to map)
The 28th will land here, at Green Beach. Suribachi's guns are the biggest problem - they can hit any point on the island, we're all sitting ducks until we take them out. That's our job. We cut across the island, right at the base, slit its throat and lop off its head. Then we take the mountain. We take the mountain, we take the big guns, we take their eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. DOC'S BUNK -- NIGHT

Iggy rousts Doc.

IGGY
You hear the good news, Doc? We're going in with the first waves.

Someone throws a boot and hits Iggy.

IGGY (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey! Do that again I take your head off.

The off stage marine laughs.

DOC
Iggy, have you ever heard news you considered to be bad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IGGY
The first ones off the ship, Doc! Means we don't go over the side of the ship. We walk to the tailgate, hop on a tractor and they drive us right there!

DOC
...Shit, that is good news.

IGGY
Did I tell you?

Iggy walks off, leaving Doc feeling much better about things.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. MISSOULA -- MORNING

Ira and Rene wake to a deafening roar.

CUT TO:

THE SHIP'S GUNS

shell Iwo Jima. Thousands of rounds from hundreds of ships.

CUT TO:

ON DECK

Iggy, barely dressed, finds his way to the rail, already crowded with Marines. Doc trails behind.

IGGY
Look at that! We're killing 'em, Doc!

Rene hustles past, a courier pack under his arm. We follow him inside. He opens a door to....

INT. COMMANDER'S CONFERENCE ROOM

where a high level meeting is in progress. Capt. Severance sits behind Col. Johnson, who sits at a table with the ship's commander and a half dozen other Navy and Marine brass and their immediate juniors. General Holland "HOWLIN' MAD" Smith is on his feet, yelling into the horn. Rene passes the courier pack to Severance, who checks the photos inside and passes it to Johnson, under:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWLIN' MAD
I was promised ten days of shelling! You're giving me three and saying *that's the best you can do*?!
(listens)
I don't give a shit! My men hit that beach with less than ten and I'll be taking them home to their mamas in buckets!
(listens)
Yeah, I know exactly why! Because every navy man with a scrambled egg on his chest wants to offload us here and sail to Japan so they can be there for the big finish, tell their kids they captured the emperor all by themselves! Well, you aren't going to Japan unless we take this piece of shit island!
(beat)
Yeah, the Air Force did a fine fucking job -- 72 days of continuous bombing and not once did they get low enough to blow up anything but sand! These little pricks are dug in!
(listens)
Okay, appreciate that, Jim, three days is a fucking beautiful thing!

And he slams down the phone and burns a hole into the Navy Commander's skull. Everyone sits dead still, save Johnson, who flips through the aerial surveillance photos of Iwo.

HOWLIN' MAD (CONT'D)
You want to share that with us, Chandler?!

Johnson hands him the photographs.

COL. JOHNSON
Recon photos.

As Howlin looks.

COL. JOHNSON (CONT'D)
They've reinforced. Somehow they've tripled their fortifications.

HOWLIN' MAD
(stunned)
Sweet Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A fly on the wall, Rene takes this in.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S.S. MISSOULA -- NEXT MORNING

Dead quiet. Men squat trying to read Zane Grey paperbacks, clean their rifles and play craps, but there's a lot less talk than last time we saw them. Fog has rolled in and blankets the island. Harlon finds Mike at the railing.

HARLON
Why aren't we firing?

MIKE
Navy rules. Can't fire when it's overcast.

Mike tosses his cigarette and walks away, leaving Harlon to stare at the fog bank.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
The fog hung there for the next two days. Not one gun was fired. And the navy kept to its schedule.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S.S. MISSOULA -- NIGHT

Mike is still walking the deck, past many of the same nervous faces doing much of the same things. He pauses at Rene, who is sticking a photo into his helmet. Mike holds his hand out, Rene offers him the photo. It's a picture of Pauline.

MIKE
She's a beauty.

Mike hands it back.

RENE
A girl I know gave it to me. It's the only photograph I have. Figure, if anybody finds my helmet, there should be a girl's picture in it.

MIKE
Keep that helmet strapped on tight. Cause if I find it, I might call her myself.

CONTINUED:

Rene smiles, a little more comfortable. Mike strolls on. He passes Doc who sits packing and reorganizing his unit three kit. Iggy is going from man to man with his wet stone.

IGGY
Sharpen your knife or bayonet?

LUNDSFORD
I'm okay.

IGGY
(moves on)
Sharpen your knife or bayonet?

GUST
Iggy, get the fuck away from me.

IGGY
(moves on)
Sharpen your knife, Doc?

DOC
You sharpened it three times.

IGGY
Then I better make sure I didn't nick it.

Doc smiles and hands him his knife. Iggy takes it to the rail and goes to work on it. Mike strolls back and stops at Doc.

MIKE
Doc? When you land, don't go waving that kit around. The sharpshooters are trained to look for them; they take out a corpsman, a dozen other marines are going to die unattended.

Doc takes this in, nods. Mike strolls on. Doc looks at his kit.

IN THE RADIO ROOM

the radio operator tunes his wireless until he picks up Big Band Music. He looks out his open door, a young lieutenant stands watching, nods to go ahead. The radio operator twists two bare wires together and sends the upbeat music echoing throughout the ship.

CONTINUED:

THE MEN ON DECK

hear it and respond, lifting their spirits.

IN THE MESS DECK

Harlon and Lindberg hear it as they play dominoes. Other men sitting further down the table tap their feet or comment on the music as they play poker. Nearby a marine comes out of the heads, leaving the door open. Harlon reacts to the smell.

HARLON
(shouts)
For Christ's sake, close the door!

LINDBERG
Like that's gonna help.

The next man goes in and closes the door behind him. Down the table, Lundsford, playing gin with Franklin, notices Ira remove a small stack of photos from an envelope. They tease him good-naturedly.

LUNDSFORD
That your girlfriend, Chief? Bet she's a damn good-looking squaw.

FRANKLIN
Bet you're missing her and that little wigwam of yours.

Ira hands them the photos.

CLOSE ON FIRST PHOTO

a worn, much duplicated image of an Australian airman, blindfolded and kneeling. A Japanese officer stands over him, a samurai sword raised high, about to strike. Behind him Japanese soldiers watch and grin.

BACK TO SCENE

LUNDSFORD
Jesus.

IRA
It's what they do to prisoners.

Lundsford hands it to Franklin and flips to the next, equally horrific photograph of torture.

CONTINUED:

IRA (CONT'D)
Least the lucky ones.
(to Franklin)
If I were you, cowpoke, I wouldn't think about waving a white bandanna.

Ira stands and walks off, passing Harlon and Lindberg. The Big Band song ends.

VOICE OF TOKYO ROSE
Welcome all the Marines off Iwo Jima. Your guns are quiet tonight. Shame, because we have a lot of men waiting to meet you, with our big guns. So many big ships bringing you here. Too bad survivors will fit in a phone booth. Enjoy the music while you can, boys.

And a sad ballad plays, and the men on the mess deck hoot and holler their 'fuck you's and 'blow it out your ass' reactions to Tokyo Rose. Lundsford rips up the photos. Another marine comes out of the heads, leaving the door ajar.

HARLON
Close the goddamn door!!! Does everyone on this tub have diarrhea?!

A man stands from the table and hurries toward the heads. Harlon and the others just have to laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S.S. MISSOULA -- MORNING

Easy Company forms up in full battle dress. Orders are shouted, men hurry to find their place to disembark.

THE HUGE TAILGATE

splashes down. Inside we find Doc and the men from the 2nd and 3rd platoons boarding the idling LSTs. The ungainly looking tractors roar to life and hit the water, drenching half the men huddled in their bellies.

WIDEN

To see the first twelve waves of the assault force heading for the beach.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR -- DAY

The boys wait. Gurber steps into the hall and summons them.

GURBER
Gentlemen?

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Gurber introduces Doc, Rene and Ira to President TRUMAN while a photographer snaps pictures.

TRUMAN
Darn good to meet you, boys. Heard you had a hell of a fight on your hands out there, a hell of a fight.

RENE
Yes, sir.

TRUMAN
Ira, you're off the Gila River Reservation in Arizona, am I right?

IRA
Yes, Mr. President.

TRUMAN
Well, being an Indian you are a truer American than any of us. I bet your people are proud to see you wear that uniform.

IRA
Very proud, sir.

TRUMAN
They should be.
(joking to all of them)
Well, you fought for a mountain in the Pacific, now we need you to fight for a mountain of cash. And I don't expect you'll let us down.

THE BOYS
No, sir. / Won't, sir.

CONTINUED:

TRUMAN
Good, so go get it.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA COUNTRYSIDE -- NIGHT

The big steam engine of an express train bursts out of a tunnel and charges north toward NYC.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Over in a booth, Gurber lays out the itinerary for Rene. No one pays much attention to Doc, Ira and Beech; they're just servicemen standing at the bar.

BEECH
(re: next round)
On me.
(bartender pours)
To those who can't be with us.

The three clink shot glasses and knock them back. Beech indicates another round. They look over to Rene. Two beauties have come up and are asking Rene for his autograph.

BEECH (CONT'D)
Ooo, look at them now. I don't know about you, but I get the impression I'm drinking with the wrong heroes.

Rene feigns humility but takes the pen and signs, flirting like an expert.

BEECH (CONT'D)
That is professional work. To professionals.

The boys toast. The bar car door opens and in swagger four executive-types in expensive suits. The alpha male is John TENNACK, forties.

TENNACK
There they are! I heard you were on the train! Are you them? You're the guys in the photograph, aren't you? Christ, it is you. Let me shake your hands. John Tennack.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TENNACK (CONT'D)
These boys work for me, Harvard and Yale types, didn't fight a lick, pappies all rich sons-of-bitches; boys shake hands with some real heroes.

BEECH
And buy 'em a drink while you're at it.

TENNACK
Get these men some drinks.

Introductions all around, reluctant on Doc and Ira's part. Rene notices what's happening, excuses himself and heads for the bar.

TENNACK (CONT'D)
And you're the other one, aren't you? John Tennack, Tennack Homes.

RENE
Rene Gagnon.

In the background, Doc notices Ira looking a little green.

TENNACK
Please to meet you, have a drink. And take my card. When you're finished being famous, you come see me, Rene. If you can sell bonds you can sell homes. And nobody's gonna build homes anymore, they're gonna deliver them. You heard of prefab homes?

RENE
No, sir.

In the background, Doc makes an excuse and guides Ira off in the direction of the heads.

TENNACK
Well, you will. You keep that card and come see me, you hear?

RENE
I certainly will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TENNACK
(re: women)
And who are your incredibly beautiful friends here?

CUT TO:

OUT ON THE COUPLING BETWEEN CARS -- MOMENTS LATER

Ira finishes retching onto the gravel that flies past underfoot. Doc pats him on the back, helps him up and hands him a hanky.

IRA
This sure takes it, huh, Doc? If Mike and the guys could see us.

DOC
Yeah, they'd hardly believe it, would they?

IRA
(laughing)
Harlon, Franklin, can you imagine Franklin on this train, eating at the dining car with all that silver?
(laughs)
And Lumsford. Did I tell you his head blew off his shoulders, I mean right off his shoulders and landed on my back?

DOC
Yeah.

A moment.

IRA
What are we doing here, Doc? We shouldn't be here. We should be back there with them.

Doc agrees, but leaves Ira to his private pain. The two men stare out at the passing forest. Suddenly a TRAIN SCREAMS PAST in the opposite direction and from that ROAR we....

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO JIMA - GREEN BEACH -- MORNING

Dead quiet, save the sounds of marines ashore or trying to get ashore, but not a single shot has been fired.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The first four waves of Marines struggle to get their equipment onto solid land - everything and everyone sinking knee deep in the fine black sand. Behind them the next eight waves of men and machines bob, wave and bang into each other. Behind them come many, many more waves. The term "cluster-fuck" was coined for just such a situation.

A harbor master, one of the very few black marines in the invasion force, screams orders to an LCT driver who is mired in the sand.

Doc, Iggy, Lindberg, Hank Hansen and the rest of the 3rd Platoon ditch their landing craft and wade ashore, led by Lt. Wells. They take cover on the steeply banked black beach.

HANK
God, this place reeks!

LINDBERG
Any theories on why they aren't shooting? Cause it's getting on my nerves.

IGGY
Maybe they're all dead. What do you think, Doc? You think they're all dead?

Up the shoreline dashes the 2nd platoon; Ira, Franklin, Harlon, with Mike and Lt. Pennel leading the way. They hit the sand beside 3rd Platoon.

LT. WELLS
You needed exercise?

LT. PENNEL
He got lost. A hundred landing craft heading for one beach and this guy gets lost.
(looking at beach)
Glad we did; Jesus what a mess.
(turns to his Sgt)
Mike, take six men and help get that gun onto--

And suddenly the world explodes. The noise of the guns is incredible, constant, deafening -- so that no one thing sounds louder than the next. Orders are shouted that cannot be heard as CARNAGE is unleashed upon the Marines.

Shells fall like rain on the invasion force. Landing craft explode, men and machines just vaporize, body parts fly

CONTINUED:

through the air, raining down on others. It's an inconceivable slaughter.

Men from the second and third platoon try and dig into the beach, but its like digging in wheat, the black sand just keeps caving in.

Doc runs to help a wounded man on the beach, propped up against a log, his arm broken and bleeding, he's buried from the hips down in black sand. Doc shouts in the Marine's ear so as to be heard.

DOC
Gonna give you a shot then patch up your arm.

Doc jabs him full of morphine.

MARINE ON BEACH
(jokes into Doc's ear)
Thanks. If you can fix my arm, I'll find my legs.

Doc looks at him and smiles at the joke, then looks down, shoves his hand into the dirt where the man's lower torso should be and realizes there is nothing there. He looks back at the man, who is no longer so brave and cavalier. As Doc yells for a stretcher his face is lit by a sudden glow of a troop ship exploding into flames. A dozen landing craft burn, men jump from them on fire. A Sergeant from another company stands to rally his men.

SERGEANT
Come on, boys, we gotta get these guns off the beach!

And he disintegrates a full two seconds before we hear the explosion.

There isn't a man on the beach who isn't overwhelmed and frightened by the magnitude and intensity of the slaughter.

However, Mike sits calmly on the beach, emptying his boots. When he ties them up he slips up toward Ira, nudges him and crawls up to the top of the berm and pushes their weapons over.

The firepower is incredible -- and not one Japanese soldier is in sight, not one puff of smoke from a gun.

CONTINUED:

IRA
(shouts/barely heard)
Where are they?! They're nowhere!
Where the hell are they?!

Harlon, Franklin and several of the men from 2nd platoon join them on the berm. Mike shouts to Ira:

MIKE
They have better gunpowder than we do, you won't see any smoke! Watch for a flash and then shoot at it!

Ira does so; others follow his lead, but hitting anything is almost impossible. They watch as:

A LIEUTENANT IN "A" COMPANY

gives the signal and it's repeated by his Sergeant.

SERGEANT
Across the island! Let's go!

His men follow him, zigzagging as they run right into enemy territory, tearing a path along the foot of Suribachi.

EASY COMPANY

gives what cover they can, but A Company is cut to shreds before their eyes. Lt. Pennel and Mike share a look, Pennel nods. Mike stands and waves.

MIKE
Okay! Across the island! Let's go--

CUT TO:

INT. CADILLAC LIMOUSINE -- NIGHT

Gurber sticks his head in the open door and shouts.

GURBER
--let's go-let's go!

Rene is first out the door. Doc and Ira share a look. Beech motions for them to go first and grabs Ira's beer before he gets to the door. As they emerge they are in.

CUT TO:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NYC -- NIGHT

Packed with throngs of people. The car pulls away and the crowd spots the boys. A wave of cheers spread as people claw to touch the celebrities.

Gurber and Beech steer the boys through the crush of well-wishers and autograph seekers toward the quickly-erected stage.

REPORTER #3
Ira, we heard the picture was posed, that true?

IRA
What?

REPORTER #3
We heard he posed the picture. Doc, did you pose for it?

They don't stop to answer. And now the boys look up and see the gigantic white statue, the photograph made three dimensional.

DOC
Jesus H. Christ.

RENE
We're bigger than life, Doc!

The SINGERS on stage finish their song and the BOROUGH PRESIDENT goes to the mike and thanks them.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT
Thanks, girls! Now here are the men you've been waiting to see -- the men in white, right behind me here; the heroes of Iwo Jima: Private Rene Gagnon, Private 1st Class Ira Hayes and Navy Corpsman John "Doc" Bradley!!

Thunderous applause and cheers. He shakes their hands and leads them to the microphone. Rene is the only one willing to actually step up to it.

RENE
It's good of you people to come out tonight in support of the war effort.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RENE (CONT'D)
We really need you to buy bonds, that's for sure, because we can't win the war without your help. But as far as us being the heroes of Iwo Jima, that's just not the case. We didn't really do much at all.

IRA
(half whisper)
Especially him.

RENE
(heard it)
Especially me. I was just a runner, that's it. We put up a flag, the pipe we attached it to was heavy so it took a number of us. We got our picture taken doing it. The heroes are dead on that island. And we'd really appreciate it if you bought bonds in honor of them. Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - EMPLOYEES CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Beech shoves open the door, leading them at a fast clip through a shortcut to the alley. Rene is right behind him, steaming; Ira and Doc bring up the rear.

RENE
You jump on any grenades, Ira?! You take out any machine gun nests that I missed?!

IRA
(amused)
Least I fired my weapon.

BEECH
Knock it off!

RENE
(to Ira)
Really? You hit anything? Or were you too drunk then, too?

Ira makes a grab for him, misses. Doc and Beech step in the way. Rene gives him a look that says "anytime" and pushes through the next door into:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE HOTEL KITCHEN

where the men are met by APPLAUSE from the waiters, busboys and kitchen staff who line the walls. Caught off guard, Rene, Ira and Doc are touched by this genuine and heartfelt show of appreciation. The boys walk the length of the kitchen, shaking hands, a little ashamed by what just happened in the hall.

MATCH CUT TO:

HOTEL BALLROOM

More handshakes, more applause, but now from folks in tuxedos and cocktail dresses. The boys work their way toward the front, where a huge blow-up of the famous photo hangs on the wall above the raised dais.

TIME CUT:

HOTEL BALLROOM

Doc, Rene and Ira sit listening to a speech by a local politician. As their dinner plates are cleared, Beech slips a flask out of his jacket, surreptitiously pours a shot into his coffee and slips it to Ira, who does the same.

LOCAL POLITICIAN
...not just the right thing to do, but the only thing to do. Yes, this war has gone on too long.

Deserts are placed in front of the boys: vanilla ice cream pressed into the shape of the flagraisers, with tiny paper flags waving above. Doc stares at his. His WAITER (50s) softly asks:

WAITER
Chocolate or strawberry?

LOCAL POLITICIAN
We have given too many lives...

Doc glances down the table, sees another waiter pouring strawberry syrup onto the tiny white men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOC
I'm fine.

WAITER
My son's in A Company. Haven't heard from him, thought you mighta bumped into him. Charlie Morris?

DOC
Sorry.

LOCAL POLITICIAN
...and its cost has been far too high. But if we waiver now, if we don't dig deep and give more than we think we can, then the unthinkable could happen. All those sacrifices would be wasted, those lives lost in vain.

The waiter moves on. Doc watches him.

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO - BEACH -- DAY

D-Day plus 2. Doc helps a wounded marine limp to the medical tent set. Nearby, big guns are dragged ashore over the beach littered with the carcasses of tanks and burnt landing craft, but cleared of bodies.

Turning away, Doc glances to his left, where a bulldozer driver gets the signal to fill in a mass grave. Doc pushes the image from his mind and hurries back to:

THE BASE OF SURIBACHI

Easy Company is dug into shell holes, trenches and craters, a couple hundred yards from the face of Suribachi. Artillery fire from behind them blasts holes in the rock face, sending splinters showering onto the men below.

WITH THE 2ND PLATOON

the noise of the guns is deafening, making it almost impossible for Lt. Pennel to hear anything on his field phone.

LT. PENNEL
(into phone)
Say again, over!....
(to himself)
Goddamn phone!
(yells to Mike)
You see any of our goddamn tanks?

MIKE
No, sir!

Within seconds the big guns fall silent. Mike looks up as:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A SQUADRON OF CARRIER PLANES

Scream in low over their heads, drilling Suribachi with rockets that explode with an ear-splitting pitch.

BACK WITH THE 2ND PLATOON

Suddenly an enemy MACHINE GUN opens fire from behind them, strafing their position and killing the man beside Ira.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Corpsman!

Ira, Mike and the others dive to the other side of their trench. Under fire, Doc runs in from a nearby hole and tends to the wounded marine. Mike spots the enemy machine gunner's position--

MIKE (CONT'D)
There!

-- just a slit in the ground, a small mound, the hole covered by burnt brush. Under the cover of small arms fire, two marines grab their belt-fed heavy machine gun, spin it around and blast away.

Mike motions to Ira, who snatches a grenade, pulls the pin and makes a dash for it. He tosses the grenade into the hole and hits the ground. Mike runs up with his machine gun, sticks it in the hole and blasts away. Ira tosses another grenade in just to be safe and they scurry back to join the others.

They get to the trench just as Rene jumps in, out of breath.

LT. PENNEL
(instantly/to Rene)
Where the hell are our tanks?!

RENE
Stuck in the sand; Captain says you're to go without them!

LT. PENNEL
Christ.

Rene doesn't know what else to say. He scrambles back out of the hole to spread the word. On his way:

IRA
(having overheard)
That's good work you're doing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rene gives him a dirty look and runs on to find Lt. Wells in the next hole. Ira watches as

LT. WELLS

takes it in, then simply steps up out of the trench, waves his gun toward the mountain and starts running.

LT. PENNEL AND MIKE

are up and running a split second later

MIKE
Let's go!

And men from both platoons follow without another thought. We rise:

HIGH AND WIDE

to see the entirety of Easy Company charging toward Suribachi. At first in groups of threes and fours, and finally everyone. And suddenly Suribachi explodes back at them, screaming death.

IRA, HARLON AND FRANKLIN

and the 2nd sweep forward in the vanguard, on the company's far right. To their left runs...

DOC, HANK AND IGGY

and the 3rd Platoon, with Japanese shells bursting and bullets cutting down marines all around them. The air is filled with strangled voices hollering "corpsman!" Doc splits off to help a downed soldier as Hank and Iggy run on.

MARINES

crumple together, blown to bits, sliced open by hot shards of steel.

GUN FIRE

comes from everywhere, from every tiny crevice or hole, from nowhere -- not a Japanese soldier in sight.

RAKED AND RAKED AGAIN

the marines take cover, cut down in the crossfire.

CONTINUED:

RENE

watching from the safety of the trench, turns away and heads back to command.

PENNEL, MIKE AND MEN OF THE 2ND PLATOON

still running, outpacing the others, now take fire from front and side. The man carrying the flamethrower suddenly explodes into a ball of fire. A few yards behind him...

A SECOND FLAMETHROWER

hits the ground and hurriedly pulls his napalm unit off his back. He undoes his belt, ties it to the straps and pulls the laces out of his shoes.

AHEAD - WITH MIKE AND THE MEN

they dive into what cover they can find as...

A WELL-CAMOUFLAGED BLOCKHOUSE

in their path pins them down with heavy machine gun fire.

BACK WITH DOC

patching up a marine behind a mound of dirt. Hears a distant voice:

ANOTHER WOUNDED MARINE
Corpsman! Corpsman!

Without taking a beat, Doc leaps up and runs out through 30 yards of saturated gunfire. He finds the marine losing blood fast, sees he can't move him. Doc sees the source of the fire, places his own body between it and the wounded boy. He ties a plasma bottle to kid's rifle, jams it bayonet-first into ground. He flinches as a bullet strikes his Unit 3 pack, then another, but he keeps working.

IGGY AND HANK

watch him from the "safety" of a small mound of earth, see the bullets hitting the ground around him. Certain death.

HANK
DOC!!

CONTINUED:

DOC

hears and jabs his arm out in their direction, palm open, warning them not to come.

A MORTAR

hits the dirt just a couple feet in front of Iggy and Hank. They dive for the nearest hole just a heartbeat before it explodes.

IGGY AND HANK

land in the hole on top of two dead marines. Now the machine gun fire that killed those two boys has them pinned down flat.

DOC

sticks the wounded marine with a shot of morphine and shoves something between the man's teeth...

DOC
Bite!

He grabs the boy by his shoulders and drags him back through those same hellish thirty yards toward safety.

WITH 2ND PLATOON

under barrage of machine gun and close-in mortar fire.

MIKE
(yells)
I need two volunteers!

Two men nod. They huddle closer to Mike, who gives them instructions we can't hear in this din.

Mike and the other men lay down covering fire as the two men climb out of the hole, splitting left and right to rush the pillbox. They are both cut down before they get ten yards.

MIKE

takes that hard, understandably so.

WITH THE 3RD PLATOON

in a trench about fifty feet behind the 2nd. Drops runs in from the rear, jumping into the hole just a second before A SHELL explodes nearby and...

CONTINUED:

LT. WELLS

is hit by hot shrapnel; his pants burst into flames. Doc and two others quickly smother the flames. Doc spots Wells' mangled leg and treats it. Just above them, at the rim of the hole...

IGGY, HANK AND OTHERS

fire at whatever they can see, which isn't much, so they fire blind.

IGGY
(lightning speed)
Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death amen. Hail Mary full of grace....

WITH DOC AND WELLS

Doc bandages the wound, yells to be heard.

DOC
We have to get you to the rear!

LT. WELLS
(quiet determinism)
Fuck the rear.

Wells crawls up to the rim beside Hank. He asks Hank a question we can't hear and Hank points to a nearby enemy blockhouse.

WITH MIKE AND THE 2ND PLATOON

The platoon's flamethrower finally arrives, struggling to drag his unit behind him.

Mike says something we can't hear to Harlon and then bolts out of the hole and charges the pillbox. Harlon and Ira barely get a chance to lay down covering fire before Mike is at the pillbox and tossing in a grenade. The flamethrower runs in and torches whatever remains.

JAPANESE DEFENDERS

burst out of the pillbox, some in flames, and make a dash for the mountain. Mike, Ira and the others cut them down. Still in the trench, Gust looks to the man beside him, Ira...

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON IRA'S FACE

The SCREAMS of the dying Japanese soldiers mix with the SCREECH OF BRAKING METAL WHEELS, as we....

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO'S UNION STATION -- DAY

The wheels lock up and spit sparks, the conductor coming into the station behind schedule and just a little too hot.

The waiting photographers, local politicians and dignitaries are jostled by the large and anxious crowd of civilians, there to catch a glimpse of....

DOC, RENE AND IRA

stepping off the train, Beech and Gurber at either end. They spot the giant hanging banner, boasting their image, just before they are swallowed up by the crowd. Photos are snapped, autograph books, newspapers and photographs are pressed toward the men, which Doc and Ira try to get out of signing. Surprisingly, so does Rene, now less enamored with his celebrity.

PAULINE

elbows her way through the crowd.

PAULINE
Let me through! That's my boyfriend!
That's my boyfriend!

RENE and the others spot her.

GURBER
God, where the hell did she come
from?

PAULINE
(calling)
Rene!

The crowd lets her pass and she throws her arms around Rene with such force that he's knocked off balance and Gurber has to catch him. The press go wild snapping photos.

PRESS
Rene? What's your girl's name? /
How about a picture of you two? /
Look over here, doll.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Doc and Ira share a discreet look.

BEECH
(mutters)
Christ, let's find a bar.

Beech, Doc and Ira disappear into the crowd. Gurber is clearly not pleased with her scene stealing. Even Rene seems embarrassed.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL -- NIGHT

A crowd on the sidewalk watch the high and mighty arrive in fine style. A huge, hand-painted banner depicting the flag raising announces the bond drive event inside. A limousine pulls to the curb...

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE -- CONTINUOUS

Gurber grills Pauline.

GURBER
And where are you staying?

PAULINE
I'm not sure yet.

GURBER
Don't even think about it.
(grabs the handle)
Smile, boys. Give them their money's worth.

Gurber opens the door and holds it. Photographers flash as Rene exits, Pauline on his arm, Doc next. Beech straightens Ira's tie -- he's holding his liquor better than Ira.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL

The boys walk the red carpet, greeted by applause, cheers and handshakes. At this point the only one reveling in this is Pauline.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAKE HOTEL - BALLROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

More handshakes and hearty greetings as the boys enter through the crowded receiving line, which includes movie stars, politicians and military brass. As Rene and Pauline pass, Gurber introduces Doc to a SENATOR.

GURBER
Senator, I'd like you to meet Corpsman John Bradley. *

SENATOR
"Doc," right? Good to meet you, young man. We appreciate everything you've done and everything you're doing.

DOC
Thank you, Senator.

Doc moves on.

GURBER
And this is Private First Class Ira Hayes.

SENATOR
Of course! I hear you used a tomahawk on those Japs, that true, Chief?

IRA
No, sir.

SENATOR
(laughs)
Well, tell them you did, it makes a better story.

WITH DOC

shaking hands. He looks ahead and sees three matronly women in the crowd, standing together, speaking to several well heeled guests. This is the moment he's dreaded. He looks away, hoping to forestall the moment, but one of the women has seen him and walks toward him. It's Hank Hansen's mom, Madeline Evelley.

HANK'S MOM
John? Madeline Evelley, I recognize you from all the photos. I'm Hank's mom.

CONTINUED:

DOC
It's good to meet you. Hank was always talking about you.

HANK'S MOM
He was? I would have thought you boys would have had a lot of other things on your mind.

DOC
No, he talked about you a lot.

Doc can see that she is doing everything she can not to cry.

HANK'S MOM
He was a good boy. This... When I got the telegram... I don't know what I'm trying to say, but...knowing he was with you that day, seeing him in that photograph... I don't know why it makes me feel better, but it does. Silly, isn't it?

DOC
No. No, it's not.

HANK'S MOM
Would you mind?

She nods toward the blow up of the famous photo on display and walks him toward it.

HANK'S MOM (CONT'D)
(pointing out Harlon)
The paper said this was him, but I honestly can't tell. Horrible of a mother, not to know her own son. But that's him, right?

DOC
To be honest, it was so quick, and with everything that was going on it's hard to remember who was where.
(reads her face)
But, yeah, I think that's where he was. That's Hank.

HANK'S MOM
Thank you.
(now the tears come)
Excuse me.

CONTINUED:

She turns and pulls a hanky from her purse; a proud woman, not wanting to show her tears.

WITH IRA AND BEECH

as they step up to the two remaining mothers, Rene and Pauline just behind them.

BEECH
Ira, I'd like you to meet Mrs. Strank, Mike's mom.

She hugs Ira. Ira grabs her tight and won't let go, his tears running down his face.

WITH RENE AND PAULINE

And a wealthy BUSINESSMAN, who offers Rene his card.

BUSINESSMAN
We're the largest furniture wholesaler in Illinois.

But Rene has spotted the Gold Star Mothers.

RENE
Thank you. Excuse me.

And he moves off without another thought, leaving Pauline. She takes the card.

PAULINE
I'll make sure he calls.

RENE APPROACHES MRS. SOUSLEY

MRS. SOUSLEY
You're Rene?

RENE
Yes, Ma'am.

She offers her hand.

MRS. SOUSLEY
I'm Franklin's mother.

RENE
It's an honor to meet you, ma'am.

CONTINUED:

PAULINE
(approaching)
I'm Pauline, Rene's girlfriend. I'm so sorry for your loss.

Rene and Mrs. Sousley glance at Ira, who sobs and won't let go of Mrs. Strank.

GURBER

sees that Ira is creating a scene and wonders if he should do something. But he's genuinely moved, so decides against it and continues making conversation with a guest.

WITH DOC AND HANK'S MOM

They look away from Ira and Mrs. Strank.

DOC
Um...I promised Hank I would give this to you, Ma'am.

He takes Hank's watch from his pocket and she takes it.

HANK'S MOM
...When? When did he ask you to give it to me?

DOC
On the ship. On the way there.

HANK'S MOM
So, he died quickly?

DOC
Yes, ma'am.

She nods.

WITH IRA AND MRS. STRANK

still in the embrace.

IRA
He was the best Marine I ever met.

MRS. STRANK
Thank you, Ira.

CONTINUED:

Ira feels stupid, but it was the only thing he could think of saying.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARGYLE HOTEL -- NIGHT

Doc, Rene and Beech step out of the car into the rain. Ira slips and lands face first on the sidewalk. *

RENE
Jesus Christ!

Doc and Beech help him up.

BEECH
You okay, Chief?

IRA
Yeah, I'm okay.

RENE
Yeah, you look it. You're going to screw this up, aren't you? You're going to screw it up for all of us.

Rene turns on his heels and slams through the lobby door.

DOC
(to Beech)
I got him.

BEECH
Get some sleep, Ira.

Doc helps him into the lobby. Beech lights a cigarette and sucks in some "fresh air," watching them go. He leans against a parked car and removes his flask from his pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. ARGYLE HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Rain pelts the glass as Doc helps Ira onto the twin bed closest to the window and yanks off his boots. Doc turns off the lamp and disappears into the bathroom. Ira lies in the dark, staring out the window, barely able to keep himself from sobbing. A flash of lightning, a crack of thunder and he is right back on....

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- NIGHT

Ira lies with his head peeked over the edge of a crater, staring into the pitch black night, watching for movement. The others sleep in the pit below, their uniforms soaked and muddy, finding no shelter from the rain. Mike keeps watch from the far side of the crater. All Ira can hear is the repetitive sound of scraping. He looks back over his shoulder.

DOWN IN THE PIT

Franklin, the only other man not sleeping, scrapes away at the dirt at the bottom of the pit with his shovel. The black sand caving in with every scoop, but digging a deeper hole may be more a reflexive reaction than a logical pursuit.

A flare goes up somewhere in the distance and....

IRA

looks back and sees...

THREE JAPANESE SOLDIERS

silhouetted by the flare, charging silently down into a shell hole thirty feet away, bayonets pointed. Ira SCREAMS and fires, knocking one back. MIKE turns and runs as...

IN THE NEXT SHELL HOLE

the Japanese attackers fall onto the sleeping marines, driving the bayonets into their bellies. One man screams out:

IMPALED MARINE
Ma! Ma! He's killing me!

MIKE AND IRA

charge into the shell hole... Mike pulls the trigger of his machine gun but nothing happens. He tosses it aside, grabs his knife and drives it into chest one of the attackers. Ira shoots and hits the remaining soldier, who falls grabbing at his wound. Ira fires a second shot and kills him.

MIKE
Corpsman!

A Corpsman comes running, but it's obvious that even the screaming marine is dead. Harlon and the other men who were sleeping back in the crater now stand on the rim of the shell hole, staring at their dead buddies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly Franklin runs up from behind.

FRANKLIN
(a loud whisper)
Mike?!

MIKE
(still staring at the dead men)
Yeah.

FRANKLIN
Come here, come here!

And Franklin runs back off to their crater. Mike turns and heads back. Ira is the last to leave, staring at the incredibly young looking Japanese soldier he killed.

BACK AT THEIR PIT

Mike and Ira climb back in. Franklin is back at the bottom, scraping away dirt.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(a whisper)
Look.

He scrapes away another shovelful, revealing wood slats.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
It's wood.

Franklin puts his ear to the wood.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Shit, I can hear them down there. They're right below us.

HARLON
I thought they were in holes.
(to Mike)
They're in tunnels.

MIKE
Get me some gasoline.

TIME CUT:

A GAS CAN

is passed from hand to hand, down to Mike in the pit, where men quietly scrape away more of the boards and poke a slit between them. He nods for them to leave, Mike opens the can and pours. From below we hear MUFFLED YELLS. Mike scrambles up the bank of the crater.

Harlon passes him a burning rag and Mike tosses it in and the pit explodes in flames. SCREAMS are heard below and a CHEER rises from the Marines; Ira turns away, sickened by the sound. Mike and Harlon, also not cheering, walk off to find a new place to dig in for the night.

IN A FOXHOLE - A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY

Doc watches the men walk away, silhouetted by the distant flames. He closes his eyes, opens them again as he hears...

IGGY (V.O.)
You think we got em all?

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- EARLY MORNING

Iggy sits beside Doc, staring up at Mt. Suribachi. Behind them Marines mass for an assault. It's D-Day plus 4.

DOC
What?

IGGY
They're not shooting, maybe we killed 'em all. Or they ran off in the night or something.

DOC
Yeah, maybe.

HANK
(steps up beside them)
Or they're just waiting for us to start climbing.

Sgt. BOOTS Thomas, who we've seen fighting with the 3rd platoon, calls out.

BOOTS
Platoon, up the hill, move out!

CONTINUED:

IGGY
Just us?

HANK
Just us, Igg.

Doc, Iggy, Hank and the rest of the 3rd grab their gear and weapons and head the last few yards to the base of Suribachi. Louis LOWERY, a photographer, approaches Hank.

LOWERY
I tag along?

HANK
Yeah, you can lead the way if you want. Get a good shot of my face.

LOWERY
It's your ass I'm gonna make famous, Hank.

HANK
That'd work for me, too.

BEHIND THE LINE

Col. JOHNSON has been giving the platoons new Lieutenant, Lt. SHRIER, his orders. Shrier starts away.

COL. JOHNSON
Lieutenant.

Shrier turns back. Johnson hands him a folded flag.

COL. JOHNSON (CONT'D)
If you make it to the top, put this up.

LT. SHRIER
Yes, sir.

WITH THE 3RD

cautiously climbing, watching every hole and outcropping.

HANK
Don't worry, Iggy. They never shoot the first patrol.

IGGY
They don't?

CONTINUED:

HANK
Nah, they want us to go up, tell the rest it's safe and then shoot everybody else when they start up.

IGGY
Really?

HANK
Yep.
(long beat)
Unless of course they want to make an example us, discourage all the others.

Hank is enjoying torturing Iggy much too much.

IGGY
(catching on)
I think you're full of crap, you know that, Hank?

HANK
Really?

WITH MIKE AND THE 2ND PLATOON

on a probe around the base of the mountain. Ira turns and spots the men climbing.

IRA
Jesus.

The others follow his eye, and stop and watch.

HARLON
Thank God that's not us.

MARINES -- ON THE BEACH

stop and watch. The brass step out of their tents and raise binoculars to their faces.

WITH DOC AND LINDBERG (THE FLAMETHROWER) - CLIMBING

LINDBERG
What you worrying about, Doc?

DOC
How the hell I'm going to get the wounded down this mountain.

CONTINUED:

LINDBERG
Oh, don't think you have to worry about that.

ALL OVER THE ISLAND

Marines stop what they're doing, watch the ascent, and forget to breathe.

AT HQ - RENE

is one of them. As he watches...

CUT TO:

A MASHED POTATO MOUNTAIN

is wheeled into the BANQUET HALL on a cart. It's huge, shaped like Suribachi, and surrounded by roast beef and vegetables at the base. Lead soldiers climb the mountain carrying a flag while others surround the base. It stops in front of Rene. The two servers place a slab of sliced beef, vegetables and a scoop of Mt. Suribachi onto his plate and move on.

THE BAND plays as several such carts serve the luncheon guests. Doc, Rene and Ira seem inured to the spectacle and absurdity by now. Three women in sexy GI outfits step onto stage and sing "Buy Buy Bonds."

IRA'S HAND

trembles over the rare roast beef. He puts his knife down, unable to cut it. Doc pretends not to notice.

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO - ATOP MT. SURIBACHI -- DAY

The men of the third platoon make it to the top, stunned and surprised that no one has even shot at them. They look around as if trying to see the punch line to this joke. It doesn't come. They look at each other.

IGGY
Told ya.

Doc looks at him as if Iggy might have some sort of direct connection to God.

CONTINUED:

LT. SHRIER
Find me a pole!

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON A DRAINAGE PIPE ON GROUND -- MOMENTS LATER

Hansen spots the pole in the twisted wreckage of Japanese guns.

HANK
Here!

Boots, Hansen and Lindberg heft the pole, Schrier grabs the end.

ANGLE ON FLAG

Schrier ties the flag to the end of the pole and nods and the others hoist it into position. And even up here they can hear the CHEER rise from below as...

MARINES AND NAVY MEN

from all across the island and on the surrounding ships YELL, WHISTLE and SCREAM. Ships' horns BLAST. IRA, MIKE, HARLON and the men of the 2nd platoon among them. RENE smiles and heads for forward command.

ATOP SURIBACHI -- THE FLAG

flaps in the wind. Suddenly...

A DOZEN JAPANESE DEFENDERS

come screaming up out of a hole and charging. Hank Hansen and the men of the third cut them down. As they check to see that they're dead:

LOWERY SETS UP HIS CAMERA

LOWERY
Okay, guys. Who wants to be famous?

AT THE BASE OF SURIBACHI -- WITH THE 2ND PLATOON

Mike and his men return from their patrol, exhausted, drop their equipment and fall to the ground. Capt. Severance approaches.

CONTINUED:

CAPT. SEVERANCE
They want a phone line run up to the top of the mountain.

MIKE
And they picked us.
(stands again)
Okay, time to get some exercise.

The men groan and grab their packs.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - CHICAGO -- DAY *

The day is overcast and drizzling, just like it was on Iwo. There's a beehive of activity as people on the field and in the stands get ready for an event tonight -- dancers rehearse, bunting and banners are raised, chairs are set up, PA tested. Gurber and Beech lead Doc, Rene and Ira onto the stadium field, where they look up and see....

A HUGE SURIBACHI-LIKE MOUNTAIN

made out of papier-mache.

DOC
You gotta be kidding.

GURBER
Took a lot of talented folks a long time to make that. Wait till tonight when it's lit and there are thousands of cheering people in the stands, it's gonna look a lot better.

The boys are speechless. Even Beech seems embarrassed by this.

GURBER (CONT'D)
So, the stadium lights go down, spotlight comes up, you get your cue and you charge up this thing with the flag, plant it at the top, smile wave, you know the routine.

IRA
You want us to plant the flag in a pile of papier-mache.

CONTINUED:

GURBER
That's show-biz. And try and stand how you did when you planted it the first time. Just pretend the other three guys are with you.

IRA
The dead guys.

GURBER
(tiring of the attitude)
Yeah.

DOC
Okay, not a problem.

GURBER
(staring at Ira)
Good.

DOC
But where should we imagine Hank is standing?

GURBER
Sorry?

DOC
Seeing that he wasn't there, it'll be hard for us to leave a space for him.

Gurber walks up, looks him in the eye.

GURBER
Oh, I think you know where he was. You pointed him out to his mother.

IRA
This is bullshit. I already raised the damn thing once, I'm not going to do it again.

And Ira turns and walks off into the tunnel.

RENE
Oh, for Christ's sake.

GURBER
Hayes, you get your ass back here this second or you're going on report.

CONTINUED:

Ira doesn't respond -- he's disappeared into the tunnel.

GURBER (CONT'D)
HAYES!!!
(to Beech)
You want to do your fucking job?

Beech doesn't like it but he scurries into the tunnel after Ira.

IN THE TUNNEL - UNDER THE STANDS

Beech trots in, stops, no sign of Ira. Prelap:

ROSENTHAL (O.S.)
Shit!!

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO - BEACH -- DAY

Rosenthal steps off a landing craft into knee-deep water, shoves his arm down and feels around the bottom before he comes up with his Speed Graphic camera.

ROSENTHAL
Shit!

Genaust grabs his motion picture camera and jumps off as Rosenthal shakes his camera and tromps to shore.

GENHAUST
I hope it still works.
(with a smile)
Cause you're not getting mine.

Rosenthal turns to say something, sees Secretary Of The Navy FORRESTAL and Howlin' Mad Smith coming ashore. He dries off his lens as they step off the LCT and snaps off a shot.

ROSENTHAL
See that? It went click and everything.

WITH FORRESTAL AND HOWLIN' MAD

moving ashore and toward the command tent, paying no attention to the Japanese shells that burst further up the beach, or the fierce fighting going on there. Their eyes are fixed on the flag atop Suribachi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWLIN' MAD
I don't know whose idea it was, Mr. Secretary.

FORRESTAL
Well it was goddamn brilliant. I want that flag, Holland. Mark my words -- raising that son of a bitch means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years. I want that flag.

CUT TO:

INT. FORWARD COMMAND POST - NEAR THE BASE OF SURIBACHI

A hastily built village is forming. We find Col. Johnson in his command shack, listening to the field phone. Captain Severance waits in the open doorway.

COL. JOHNSON
Yes, sir. We'll make sure no one touches it. You can count on me.
(hangs up)
Fuck that.

We follow him as he talks to Severance and goes into the command shack, opens a trunk and pulls out a flag.

COL. JOHNSON (CONT'D)
That flag belongs to the men in this company. That son-of-a-bitch thinks our men died taking this ground so that we could hand over our flag to some politician so he can pin it to his wall, he is out of his goddamn mind. Get me that flag, put this one up instead.

He shoves the replacement flag into Severance's hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORWARD COMMAND POST

Severance strides forward, flag under his arm, spots:

CAPT. SEVERANCE
GAGNON!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rene comes running.

CUT TO:

ON THE WAY UP SURIBACHI

Mike, Harlon, Franklin, Ira and the rest of the 2nd platoon lay out cable as they climb, keeping a close watch for enemy positions. They pass Lowery, the Marine photographer on his way down the hill.

We follow Lowery, who passes photographers Rosenthal and Genaust on their way up.

LOWERY
You missed a beautiful shot, Joe.

ROSENTHAL
It's that kinda day.

Lowery keeps heading down and passes Rene, climbing, weapon in his hand, flag tucked in his jacket.

CUT TO:

ATOP SURIBACHI

Rene arrives, winded, and finds Lt. Schrier of the 3rd Platoon.

RENE
Cap says he wants that flag.

LT. SHRIER
He wants this flag?

RENE
Yeah.

LT. SHRIER
We just put the damn thing up.

RENE
Yeah.

LT. SHRIER
There some kind of flag shortage?

Rene pulls the replacement flag out and hands it to him.

CONTINUED:

RENE
He wants you to put this one up instead.

LT. SHRIER
(spots 2nd platoon)
Mike! Do me a favor. Put this up, will you?
(calls to his men)
We're taking the flag down, boys.

HANK
What?

CUT TO:

HARLON -- MOMENTS LATER

HARLON
Found one!

He reaches into a pile of twisted junk and pulls out a drain pipe. Franklin gives a hand.

FRANKLIN
Lordy, she's a heavy one.

Mike and Harlon step up and they heft it onto their shoulders.

WITH DOC - PASSING

MIKE (O.S.)
Hey Doc, give us a hand here, will ya?

Doc heads off.

WITH ROSENTHAL AND GENAUST

setting up their cameras.

GENHAUST
Not in your way here, am I, Joe?

ROSENTHAL
No, I'm okay.

Rosenthal checks over his shoulder.

ROSENTHAL (CONT'D)
Jesus, Bill, there she goes.

CONTINUED:

Genaust quickly rolls his camera. Rosenthal manages to just get off a shot.

GENHAUST
You get it?

ROSENTHAL
I don't know. Wish I could've seen their faces.

SEVERANCE (V.O.)
And no one even noticed the second flag going up.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVERANCE HOME -- EVENING

Severance and James Bradley.

SEVERANCE
That damn picture was just so good, people made up the story that fit it. But your dad and the others knew what they'd done, and what they hadn't. With so many of your friends dead, it's hard enough to be called a hero for saving somebody's life. But for putting up a pole?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO STREET -- NIGHT

Doc searches the streets, passes a huge poster for the bond drive with their photo on it - the damn things are everywhere. Two cruisers are parked ahead -- four cops are manhandling a drunken Marine who still has hold of a bar stool. It's Ira. Doc takes off running.

DOC
Hey! Hey! He's with me!

That does very little. Doc tries to separate them.

DOC (CONT'D)
He's with me! Okay?

One cop pushes Doc aside, giving Ira the chance to break away from other three. He swings the chair in a wide arc to keep them back. Drunk and bleeding, Ira is still one hell of a fighter. And there is a rage in him that knows no sense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The cops pull batons and go for angles on him.

DOC (CONT'D)
Ira! Put the god damn stool down!

IRA
Tell them to put their sticks down!

DOC
(advancing)
They're cops, Ira! They're supposed to have night sticks! You aren't "supposed" to be swinging a chair in the street!
(to Sergeant)
Just let me talk to him, okay?

SERGEANT
You want to get arrested, too?

DOC
(just to him)
I've seen this man fight. I'm betting that chair gets you in the head before that baton lands a blow. Put three slugs in him, he's still gonna get you in the head.

The Sergeant sees the wisdom in this, nods to the others to give the guy some room. Doc turns and walks to Ira.

DOC (CONT'D)
You want to get killed *here*, Ira? Isn't that kind of stupid? Put down the stool.

IRA
Tell them to back off first!

DOC
I just did that!

IRA
Well, they aren't listening to you!

DOC
Jesus Mother of God.

Doc turns and goes back to the Sergeant. The BARTENDER and a few patrons now stand in the doorway

CONTINUED:

DOC (CONT'D)
(quietly/to Sergeant)
Turn around. You see that poster on the wall there? That's him.

SERGEANT
That's him?

DOC
You don't read the papers?

SERGEANT
Ah, Christ, we got another fucking hero. Get him out of here, can you do that?

Doc turns and walks back to Ira.

DOC
Put the chair down, Ira. Put the goddamn chair down!

Ira reluctantly throws it in the direction of the door. It breaks on impact. He keeps his eye on the cops.

DOC (CONT'D)
(to Ira)
You start this?

IRA
(re: bartender)
Asshole wouldn't serve me.

BARTENDER
I don't make the rules, we don't serve Indians.

Doc just stares at the man.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI CAB -- NIGHT

Doc drops Ira in the back seat, gets in next to him, hands him something to wipe his bloody face with.

DOC
(to cabbie)
Soldier Field. *

As the cab drives off, Ira turns into extreme close up, looking out the rain-speckled window. Prelap:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRA (V.O.)
What the hell is that?

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO - ATOP MT. SURIBACHI -- DAWN

Ira lies awake and on guard as dawn breaks over the Pacific. Beside him, Franklin stirs.

FRANKLIN
What's what?

There's the sound again -- a muffled explosion, then another.

IRA
Keep an eye out.

Franklin slides his rifle up beside him as Ira steps away. He follows the sound of the muffled explosions to find Doc standing near a hole in the ground.

DOC
It's coming from down there.

The two men look to each other. Ira makes the decision and slips down into the hole. Doc looks around, not sure this is a good idea.

IRA (O.S.)
It's clear.

Doc slides down into the hole.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL -- CONTINUOUS

Ira's flashlight beam cuts through the dust that hangs in the tunnel. Doc turns on his own and the two men cautiously advance. Within a few steps they come upon bodies. Doc stoops and carefully flips over the dead Japanese soldier -- there's a big hole where his chest once was.

IRA
Christ.

They look down the line of bodies, each with similar wounds. Another muffled explosion and distant flash comes from below, deep within the tunnel. Then another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOC
They're using grenades. They're killing themselves.

Ira stares at the dead, trying to comprehend this new horror. Doc stands.

DOC (CONT'D)
Come on.

Doc climbs back out, but Ira can't turn away.

DOC (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ira?

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI CAB -- NIGHT

DOC
Let's go.

Ira nods and slides unsteadily out of the cab. Doc steadies him as they walk away.

CUT TO:

INT. SOLDIER FIELD - TUNNEL -- NIGHT *

Sounds of the huge rally filter into the bowels of the stadium as Doc and Ira approach Rene and Beech.

BEECH
Thank God.
(sees Ira's condition)
Jesus, look at you.

Doc leans Ira up against the wall and he and Beech straighten his clothes and wipe his face. Rene shakes his head and looks away, sees Gurber approaching from the stadium end.

GURBER
You found him!
(sees Ira)
Oh, great. You would have to pick today. Vanedegrift is here, and he brought so much brass they could start a band. Jesus. Can you walk?

IRA
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gurber shakes his head.

GURBER
I don't care if you carry him, get him to the top, plant the flag and don't fucking fall over.

He turns on his heel and heads back into the stadium. Ira turns to watch him. The marching drums sound like machine gun fire.

MIKE (O.S.)
Stay down, I see the second one!

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- DAY

It's Day 10 and the men are off Suribachi and pinned down by machine gun fire. Boots and half the platoon are stuck about thirty feet away.

Mike stands behind a rock. Ira, Franklin and parts of the 2nd and 3rd platoons huddle on their haunches nearby. Mike stoops and pulls out a topographical map.

MIKE
Okay, we slip back. Harlon, you take three men and come up beside that first ridge. Open up on that position, draw their fire and we'll come round and take it out.

HARLON
Got it.

Mike stands, looks at a Marine lying dead in the open a few yards away.

MIKE
That must be some experience, huh?

Suddenly a SHELL lands between him and the dead man, blowing Mike off his feet. Harlon grabs for him, tearing open his jacket. Ira cradles Mike's head; with a shudder Mike dies.

WITH BOOTS AND DOC

Boots stands looking out to sea; screams into the field phone.

CONTINUED:

BOOTS
They're our men! You're targeting our men!

Suddenly the phone is shot out of his hands.

BOOTS (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, get me another phone!

The next bullet knocks him down. Doc makes a grab for him. The roar of gunfire mixes with...

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD -- NIGHT *

--the roar of applause as Doc, Ira and Rene come out of the tunnel, Rene carrying the furled flag. As they climb, fireworks planted in the fake mountain explode all around. Doc looks over his shoulder, sees...

EXT. IWO -- DAY

FLASH. Hank Hansen shot dead right behind him. Doc runs to him.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD -- NIGHT *

Doc looks back, disoriented, keeps moving forward. Ira stumbles, Doc grabs for him. Ira turns and sees...

EXT. IWO -- DAY

Harlon dying on the ground, looking up at Ira's face....

HARLON
They killed me.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD -- NIGHT *

Ira grabs for Doc's arm, Doc pulls him up. Firecrackers explode, mimicking machine gun fire and....

EXT. IWO -- DAY

A bullet hits Franklin square in the back and he falls to the earth. Doc scrambles to him, cradles him in his arms.

FRANKLIN
I'm fine, Doc, don't feel a thing.

And he takes his last breath.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD -- NIGHT *

The men struggle to reach the top. Rene plants the flag. Doc, sweating, confused, looks back as if he's heard someone call...

VOICE
Corpsman!

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- NIGHT

As Doc goes up over the ridge of the crater he spots a MARINE running and jumping into the shell hole where he left Iggy. Doc quickens his pace as fire bursts around him, coming from rifle positions that appear out of solid ground. Doc dives into the shell hole. He looks, but Iggy isn't there.

DOC
...Where is he?

MARINE
Who?

DOC
The guy who was right here. Ignatowski. Where is he?

MARINE
Maybe you jumped in the wrong hole.

DOC
I didn't jump in the wrong hole, he was right here! Where the hell did he go?
(calls)
Iggy! Iggy!!

MARINE
Shut up! You want every gook on the island shootin' at us?!

DOC
Iggy!

Something drops from Doc's pack -- and it makes the sound of metal hitting wood. Doc looks down, clears away the dirt...and finds wood slats lining the floor of the shell hole. Stomps on it. A hollow sound.

CONTINUED:

Doc stoops and scrapes away the sand at the bottom of the pit, revealing a wooden trap door. He digs his fingers in, tugs with all his might and it opens up as if it had hinges.

ANGLE FROM THE DARKNESS BELOW

Looking up at Doc as he screams:

DOC (CONT'D)
IGGY!!

The camera flies away, into the depth of the tunnel, until we can no longer see Doc above.

DOC (O.S.) (CONT'D)
IGGY!!!

Doc jumps into the tunnel as the Marine O.S. above holds open the trap door.

DOC (CONT'D)
IGGY!!!!

But the camera keeps going, into the bowels of the earth, and Doc is lost again.

DOC (O.S.) (CONT'D)
IGGY!!!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD -- NIGHT *

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, the heroes of Iwo Jima!

Crowd erupts, the band plays, the fireworks crescendo. Doc weeps, holding onto Ira. Rene waves to the crowd, but takes no joy in it. He grabs onto Ira, steadying him, so that the three man are linked. And Rene and Ira share the first kind look since this all began.

IN THE STANDS

Gurber stands beside COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT. The VIP section is packed with brass, all on their feet applauding.

CONTINUED:

Further up in the less desirable seats, Beech stands applauding because he has to, but feeling sickened by the cheap spectacle.

CUT TO:

INT. SOLDIER FIELD - TUNNEL -- LATER *

Rene and Doc walk Ira into the tunnel.

DOC
You okay?

Ira motions they should stop and he leans against the wall and vomits. Just at that moment...

VANDERGRIFT, GURBER AND BEECH

round the corner from the field.

COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT
Absolutely terrific. If that doesn't pry open their wallets...

He stops, seeing Ira vomiting further down the tunnel. Doc and Rene turn, having heard them. There is nothing they can do to make this look better.

COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, he's drunk. Fucking Indians.

Vandergrift turns and heads back to the stands. Gurber follows him. Beech and Doc share a look, then he walks forward to help.

BEECH
(to Ira)
Let's get you home, Chief.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAKE HOTEL - VANDERGRIFT'S SUITE -- MORNING

Beech stands by the door, Gurber faces Vandergrift, who pulls on his pants and ties his shoes as he speaks.

COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT
That's not what I hear. I called around, I'm not stupid.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT (CONT'D)
He's been drunk since he started this damn tour, making a spectacle of himself. He just about choked that poor woman at the reception, blubbering. Jesus Christ, you're supposed to be watching these men.

GURBER
Yes, sir.

COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT
Well, he's making us look like regular asses.

GURBER
With respect, sir, he didn't want to come on this thing in the first place. We pulled him off that ship kicking and screaming. He wants to be back with his unit.

COMMANDANT VANDERGRIFT
What unit? They're all fucking dead! This is the way he honors those men, by drinking and throwing up and--you know what, he wants it, great -- we'll send him back! Get him packed and on a train today. He's an embarrassment to the uniform.

GURBER
(reluctantly)
Yes, sir.

Gurber turns. Beech opens the door and they leave.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAKE HOTEL - HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Beech pulls the door closed behind them.

BEECH
I'll do it.

Gurber nods and walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. ARGYLE HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Beech stands looking down at Ira, who sits on his bed, looking as rumpled as his sheets.

IRA
No, that's good. It's what I want. I know it's a good thing, raising the money and that, cause we need it. But I can't take them calling me hero. All I did was try not to get shot.
(tortured by memories)
Some of the stuff I saw done, things I did.... They weren't things to be proud of, you know?
(abandons the thought)
Mike, Mike was a hero. You ever meet him?

BEECH
No.

IRA
Best Marine I ever met.

BEECH
You know, I think if Mike was sitting here instead of you, he'd be saying the exact same thing about himself, not being a hero.

IRA
Maybe. He was a good guy.
(beat)
But I think he'd be ashamed of me, seeing me the way I am.

Ira is at the point of tears. He fights them off. Beech doesn't know what to say and Ira doesn't expect a response. Ira pulls himself together.

IRA (CONT'D)
I just want to see my mother before I get shipped off. You think I could do that? See my ma?

BEECH
...Sorry, Ira.

CONTINUED:

Ira takes this in, nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO'S UNION STATION -- DAY

Ira stands beside the Westbound train, hugging Doc.

DOC
Keep your head down.

Ira nods, lets go. Rene offers his hand. Ira looks at it, takes it, pulls Rene into an embrace.

ENGINEER (O.S.)
All aboard, going aboard!

Ira gets onto the train, offers Beech a salute. Beech returns it. Ira disappears into the train and it pulls out of the station.

BEECH (V.O.)
I think I saw him once after that.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEECH HOME (THE PRESENT) -- DAY

James Bradley interviews BEECH (now 80).

BEECH AT 80
It must have been six-seven years after the war. I was working as a salesman, driving a lot.

CUT TO:

INT. BEECH'S CAR - CIRCA 1952 -- DAY

Beech has put on a few pounds. He drives along the Highway heading West, cigarette burning and radio on, the back seat piled high with samples.

BEECH AT 80 (V.O.)
I was driving west through Texas, just trying to get where I was going so I could go home.

HIS POV - THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

A man hitch-hiking, clothes filthy. An Indian. Could be Ira, but if it is he's been living a hard life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEECH AT 80 (CONT'D)
And I saw this guy hitch-hiking on the side of the road.

The car passes. They make eye contact for just a second -- though it is doubtful Ira recognizes him at this speed.

BEECH AT 80 (CONT'D)
And for a second I thought it mighta been him.

He keeps driving, glances in his rearview mirror -- Ira goes back to walking.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEECH HOME (THE PRESENT) -- DAY

BEECH AT 80
Always regret I didn't stop. But I was in a hurry.
(admits)
And it was an Indian.

Beech is ashamed for having said that, but it's the truth. A moment.

BEECH AT 80 (CONT'D)
We told the press that Ira had insisted on going back to fight with his unit, which was at least half true, but that's not what made the headlines.

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO'S UNION STATION -- DAY

A group of press huddle around Rene and Pauline as she announces:

PAULINE
We're engaged!
(showing ring)
Pauline Harnois.

Questions are called. In the background we see Doc and Beech walking away. Beech has to laugh. They walk off; turn when they hear someone running toward them. It's Rene.

RENE
Doc, you got a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEECH
I'll see you at the car.

Beech walks off. Rene has something on his mind but is having a hard time saying it.

RENE
You heard I'm getting married?

DOC
Yeah, that's great, Rene.

RENE
It's something she wants, you know. And she waited for me all this time.
(glancing back at Pauline and the press)
She's not used to this, but she's a good girl.

DOC
(something to say)
I'm sure you'll be very happy.

RENE
So I was wondering if you'd be my best man.

DOC
Me? Don't you want to ask one of your friends from your home town, or one of your buddies?

RENE
I didn't really make many. And the ones who didn't go... It's hard to even talk to them, you know?

DOC
...Yeah. I'd be proud to.

RENE
Thanks.
(glancing)
Well, better drag her away from them before she announces I'm gonna be president of General Motors or something.

Rene and Doc have an awkward moment, then he turns and runs back to Pauline.

CONTINUED:

Doc watches them together, then turns and heads for the car.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HALL -- DAY

A wedding ceremony. Just the bride, groom and Doc.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
...man and wife.

They kiss and...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY HALL -- DAY

Come out of city hall into the throngs of waiting photographers and reporters. Doc finds Beech at the car.

BEECH AT 80 (V.O.)
I couldn't complain because the press loved them, so they wrote more articles and people bought more bonds.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN CAR -- NIGHT

As it speeds along; Rene and Beech sleeping, Doc staring at his reflection in the glass, haunted.

BEECH AT 80 (V.O.)
The tour went on with just Rene and your dad.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - UNION SQUARE -- DAY

The square is decked out for a rally. Doc gives a pitch for bonds.

BEECH AT 80 (V.O.)
City after city, thought the damn thing would never end.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET BORDERING UNION SQUARE -- A SHORT TIME LATER

Follow a couple of reporters who are running to catch up with the rest, who are gathered around Doc, Beech and Rene as they try and get into the waiting car. We see them asking questions and Doc impatiently answering.

BEECH AT 80 (V.O.)
And this rumor kept going around that the photograph had been staged.
(laughs)
Remember your dad telling them that he wished he'd known he was having his picture taken, because he would have ducked the hell out of it.

Doc gets in the car and it drives off.

INT. CAR - MOVING SHOT - CLOSE ON DOC

staring out his side window, the buildings in reflection alternately revealing and obscuring his face. This is getting harder and harder for him.

GUST AT 70 (V.O.)
I remember when your dad got shot.

BANG! As the car slips into the darkness of a tunnel and Doc disappears.

OVER BLACK:

GUST AT 70 (V.O.) (CONT'D)
All hell was busting lose.

FADE UP:

INT. GUST HOME -- DAY

Walter GUST, 70's, talks to James Bradley. Gust is missing both arms.

GUST AT 70
People back home saw that picture and thought it was over when we took Suribachi. We wished. Anyways, we're pinned down, mortars, shells, machine guns -- fire is coming from every which direction, right? And we hear somebody call "Corpsman down."

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- DAY

It's raining. A CORPSMAN is hit by a bullet, blood spurts from his throat -- his back is to us as he falls in slow motion, so we don't see who it is. Until he splashes down and roles toward us. It's not Doc.

MARINE (O.S.)
Corpsman down! Corpsman's been hit!

A figure comes up out of a distant hole and runs through the heavy rain. Only when he gets close can we tell it's Doc. His knees hit the mud beside the Corpsman's face. Doc goes to work on him.

Gust comes running up. Gust drops beside them to try and help. He pulls the corpsman's pack up and tries to block him from sniper fire. *

GUST AT 70
Blood was spurting out of his throat, and Doc was doing everything he could... and the Corpsman looks up at him...and he knows what this means, to be shot in the neck, he knows he's dying...you can see that... but still, in his eyes, he's pleading with Doc to save his life.

The Corpsman dies.

GUST AT 70 (CONT'D)
And Doc can't.

Doc looks away from Gust. He doesn't want Gust to see him cry. BANG. Doc is shot. Hit hard, his body spins and lands in the mud.

Gust returns fire, several shots, then crawls to Doc.

GUST
You okay, Doc?

Doc is already working on himself, stopping the blood.

DOC
Yeah, I'm fine.

GUST
(joking/re: all the blood)
Yeah, you look fine.

CONTINUED:

DOC
I'm okay.

GUST
Keep down. I'm gonna go get a stretcher.

DOC
Okay.

Gust runs off. Doc lies down in the mud. Until he hears the cry.

WOUNDED MARINE
Corpsman! Oh, for God's sakes, Corpsman!!!

Doc looks through the driving rain, sees...

A WOUNDED MARINE - 30 YARDS AWAY

screaming, writhing in pain.

DOC

crawls to him, dragging his Unit 3 kit beside him.

DOC
It'll be okay. It's not bad, you'll be okay.

He opens his kit, puts pressure on the wound and stops the bleeding.

GUST AT 70 (V.O.)
Took us a half hour to find your dad. He could have bled to death.

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO - BEACH -- DAY

Doc is carried on a stretcher and placed on the beach for evacuation. The other marine takes off, Gust kneels with Doc.

GUST AT 70 (V.O.)
Vets will tell you about being hit but still not wanting to leave their buddies.

INT. GUST HOME

Gust and Bradley.

GUST AT 70
Usually they're lying, you'll take any excuse to get out of there. But it happens. You get the feeling you're letting them down. I could see that in your dad's face. He wanted to go, he'd seen enough, but he didn't want to leave us. He was a hell of a good man, your dad.

JAMES BRADLEY
Yeah.

James switches off his tape recorder.

GUST AT 70
While we were sitting there on the beach, we heard this great roar. And we looked up.

Gust looks up, as if he was back there...

EXT. IWO - BEACH -- DAY

Doc is staring up at something. Gust follows his gaze to see...

A CRIPPLED B-29

shot to hell, engine seized and smoking, comes in for an emergency landing. It touches down safely and...

MEN AROUND HIM

cheer.

DOC AND GUST

smile. Gust gives Doc a wink and heads back to the front.

CUT TO:

INT. GUST HOME

GUST AT 70
That was the first of thousands of landings on Iwo. That island saved a lot of lives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gust tries to hide the welling emotion as he thinks of the sacrifice of his dead friends.

INT. JAMES BRADLEY HOME - THE PRESENT -- NIGHT

He sits at his typewriter, his back to us, listening to a tape, dozens of cassette tapes beside him.

GUST AT 70 (V.O.)
A lot of lives.
(beat)
I don't know what else to tell you.

James switches it off. Sits thinking. Finally starts typing.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
After the bond tour my dad finally got his operation.

EXT. APPLETON, WI. -- DAY *

Small town life goes on. A bus pulls into the station.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
By the time he got home the war was over.

Doc disembarks to find Betty waiting for him. No running into each other's arms. They stand there, smile at each other awkwardly.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
First thing he did was ask my mom to marry him.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Ira stands uneasily at the podium, addressing the National Congress of American Indians.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
Ira tried to get on with his life and put it all behind him.

IRA
...because of the war, white men are going to understand Indians a lot better.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRA (CONT'D)
And it's going to be a better world.

CUT TO:

INT. RESERVATION -- DAY

Ira works picking crops. A car breaks on the shoulder of the road, kicking up dust.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
But life had other plans for him.

A family of tourists step out, spot him.

TOURIST
You're him, aren't you? You're the hero, right?

Ira reluctantly pulls a small flag from his back pocket.

TIME CUT:

ANGLE ON IRA AND TOURIST AND WIFE

posing for a photograph. Flash. The tourist thanks him and slips him a quarter. Ira fingers it, then puts it in his pocket, as the other young pickers RAZZ him.

YOUNG INDIAN
Hey, hero! Lift this basket, will ya? It's too heavy for me.

Ira ignores them and goes back to picking.

CUT TO:

INT. GAGNON HOME -- DAY

Pauline irons in the background as Rene speaks on the phone in the hallway, a business card in his hand.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
Rene tried to take advantage of those offers he'd received on the Bond Tour.

CUT TO:

INT. TENNACK HOMES - OFFICES -- CONTINUOUS

A SECRETARY is on the other end of the line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECRETARY
Yes, I gave Mr. Tennack your message. I'm sure he'll call.

Tennack, the big shot from the train, puts a letter on her desk and returns to his corner office.

CUT TO:

INT. GAGNON HOME -- CONTINUOUS

RENE
Thank you.

He hangs up, opens the drawer in the telephone table and drops the business card in amongst dozens of others.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
But he was yesterday's hero. He even applied for a job at the local police station.

CUT TO:

EXT. FACTORY -- MORNING

Carrying their lunch buckets, Rene and Pauline head in for work along with everyone else.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
They said he wasn't qualified. After working the factory with Pauline he tried a few things, but spent the rest of his life as a janitor. At least he lived it quietly.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL -- DAY

Ira sits on a bench in the drunk tank.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
But Ira...

JAILER
Ira, you got a visitor.

Ira stands and walks to the bars. A reporter steps into foreground, a flashbulb explodes.

CONTINUED:

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
Ira always made the news.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY JAIL -- DAY

They let Ira out. He stands looking out at the street. An ancient pickup pulls up for him. Ira looks at the driver, thinks long and hard, and then turns and walks the other way.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
I could never find out why he did it. But one day Ira just took off.

Ira turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEXAS - HIGHWAY -- DAY

Ira stands hitching. A familiar car passes. Beech. Ira turns and keeps walking along the shoulder.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
He walked and hitched over thirteen hundred miles.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLOCK FAMILY FARM - RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS -- EVENING

The sun is just setting.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
From Arizona to Texas.

Harlon's father, Ed Block, spots...

IRA

approaching on the dirt road, the only person around for miles.

ED

puts down his tool and walks to meet him.

CONTINUED:

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He found Harlon Block's father working his field. His wife, Belle, had left him soon after they discovered Harlon died. She never forgave him for letting her son go off to war.

See the two men talking now.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And Ira told him the truth, that it had been his son who raised the flag with them. His son in the photograph.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL HOME IN CALIFORNIA -- NIGHT

Belle on the phone, listening.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
Just as Belle knew all along.

BELLE
(into phone)
Thanks for calling.

She hangs up, as does...

ED

on the other end of the line.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLOCK FAMILY FARM - BACK TO SCENE -- EVENING

And after telling Ed this...

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
And then he just turned and walked away. Though the flag raising meant nothing to him, he somehow knew it would mean everything to them.

Without saying a word, Ed watches Ira go the way he came. Ed turns and walks toward his house in the distance to call his ex-wife.

CONTINUED:

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The press soon found out.

CUT TO:

INT. HANSEN HOME -- DAY

Hank's mom, Madeline, on the phone, trying to comprehend what she's being told. Her daughter steps up behind her.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
And called Hank's mom with the news that it wasn't her son after all.

Her hand goes to her face and she weeps.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY -- DAY

A large crowd is gathered for the unveiling of the Marine Corps Monument. A lot of faces we recognize.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
The last time they all saw each other was at the unveiling of the Marine Corps monument.

IRA, DOC AND RENE

sit in the front row -- along with their wives and the "Gold Star Mothers"... except we discover that Belle and Ed Block are there and Hank's mom and dad aren't.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And even though he'd planted the first flag above Iwo Jima, Hank's mother and father weren't invited.

As they stand, the ceremony over, Belle shares a small look of gratitude with Ira. Ira shakes Doc and Rene's hands, shakes Beech's on his way out, then walks off on his own.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIMA INDIAN RESERVE -- MORNING

Two young Indian boys run to find out what's going on.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
It wasn't long after that they found Ira.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The boys stop where they find their two friends, standing over Ira's body, dead on the ground.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The papers said he died of exposure. There was no autopsy.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTIGO, WI. - DOC'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Betty watches as Doc gets into his car and drives off.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
It was about that same time when my father got in his car, early one morning, telling my mom he had something to do.

CUT TO:

EXT. IGGY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE, WI -- AFTERNOON

Doc waits at the door of the working class home, which opens to reveal a woman in her 50's, Iggy's mom.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
He drove to a town on the other side of Wisconsin, where Iggy's mom lived.

TIME CUT:

ANGLE - THROUGH THE WINDOW -- MOMENTS LATER

Doc sits on the sofa, holding her hand. Whatever he is telling her isn't coming easily.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
Ever since she'd heard the news about her son she'd been trying to find out how he died, and no one would tell her.

Now she is crying.

CUT TO:

EXT. IGGY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE, WI -- MOMENTS LATER

Doc exits, tugging the front door closed behind him, trying to hold back all the pain he is reexperiencing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
I never found out what he told her, but I can pretty much guarantee it wasn't the truth.

MARINE (V.O.)
Over here.

Doc looks up, sees.

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- EVENING

A marine leads Doc toward something. His BUDDY, standing beside a small cave, the mouth exposed, nods inside.

BUDDY
Can't tell who it is, but he's one of ours.

Buddy slips in first..

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE -- CONTINUOUS

Doc follows. The marine crawls in, stops beside something we can't see and swats away the buzzing flies.

BUDDY
I had to go outside to throw up. Look what they did to the poor son of a bitch.

We don't need to see what's happened to Iggy, Doc's face tells it all.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAVE -- CONTINUOUS

Doc crawls out, sucks in air and absorbs the full horror of what he left just a few feet below.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
For the next five years my father would wake in the middle of the night, crying.

CUT TO:

INT. JAMES BRADLEY HOME - THE PRESENT -- DAY

Notebooks and cassette tapes crowd the desk. James Bradley sits amongst them, typing on his laptop computer.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
My mother would ask him what was troubling him. He would never say.

He looks off as he hears the phone ring. Sees:

CUT TO:

INT. BRADLEY HOME - CIRCA 1970 -- DAY

Doc Bradley, now in his early 40s, sits having dinner with Betty and his children. A young John Bradley gets up from the table and runs to answer the ringing phone.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
And every year as it got close to Memorial Day the reporters would start calling, asking to interview my father.

YOUNG JAMES
Hello?

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
We were always instructed to say the same thing.

YOUNG JAMES
Sorry, he's fishing in Canada. Yeah, again. Thanks.

Young James hangs up and returns to the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCCANDLESS ZOBEL & BRADLEY FUNERAL HOME -- MORNING

Doc Bradley, 40s, gets out of his car and heads up the walk, passing a neighbor.

DOC AT 40
Morning.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
When Mr. McCandless retired, my father bought the funeral home where he'd
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
worked since coming home, and spent the rest of his life running the business and raising his family.

CUT TO:

INT. BRADLEY HOME - ATTIC - THE PRESENT -- DAY

James Bradley finds an old box in the corner and opens it.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
He never spoke about the war or about the flag raising, never told us anything.

In it he finds all his dad's war memorabilia, including his Navy Cross. *

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The first time I heard any of these stories was after he died.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTIGO HOSPITAL - ICU -- EVENING

James sits with his father. Drifting out of his coma, Bradley's eyes open and search the room.

BRADLEY AT 70
(groggy)
Where is he? Oh, God.

James moves closer to him, touches his face.

JAMES BRADLEY
(quietly)
He's not here, Dad. He died.

Through blinking eyes, Bradley finally sees his son.

BRADLEY AT 70
(now)
Who? Who died?

JAMES BRADLEY
Iggy.

BRADLEY AT 70
Iggy? Christ, poor Iggy.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADLEY AT 70 (CONT'D)
I haven't thought about him for years. How do you know about him?

JAMES BRADLEY
You were calling for him. When you collapsed.

BRADLEY AT 70
(laughs, sadly)
I wasn't looking for Iggy. I was looking for you.
(beat)
I wanted to...I wanted to tell you I was sorry. For not being a better father, talking to you more. I just...I'm sorry.

JAMES BRADLEY
Sorry? You're the best father a man could have.

Bradley touches his son's hand, liking but unable to really accept it as truth.

BRADLEY AT 70
Did I ever tell you they took us swimming?

James looks at his father somewhat confused, and concerned about his state of mind.

JAMES BRADLEY
No, Dad.

BRADLEY AT 70
After we planted the flag. When we came down off the mountain, they let us swim. It's the funniest thing, all this fighting and we're jumping around in the water like kids. That's how I remember Iggy now.

James hugs his father. Bradley pats his son's back, looks out the window. Bradley closes his eyes, tired.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANTIGO HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR -- DAY

James steps out of ICU and hugs his mother. From his demeanor we know his father is gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
I finally came to the conclusion that maybe he was right. Maybe there's no such thing as heroes. Maybe there are just people like my dad.

The family arrive and the news is shared.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I finally came to understand why they were so uncomfortable being called heroes. Heroes are something we create, something we need.

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO -- DAY

Filthy and exhausted, the men of the 2nd and 3rd platoons, Easy Company, Mike, Ira, Rene, Hank, Harlon, Franklin, Lindberg, Gust, Iggy drop their packs and toss off their helmets.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.)
It's a way for us to understand what is almost incomprehensible, how people could sacrifice so much for us.

One by one they strip off their soiled clothes and toss them. When done, they stand and run off camera, naked, yelling and hooting.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But for my dad and these men... the risks they took, the wounds they suffered, they did that for their buddies. They may have fought for their country, but they died for their friends. For the man in front, for the man beside 'em.

Doc is the last to arrive. He yanks off his shirt, then sits watching the others.

JAMES BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And if we wish to truly honor these men, we should remember them the way they really were. The way my dad remembered them.

CONTINUED:

DOC'S POV:

The men act like what they are, boys barely out of high school, laughing and goofing around. We rise up...

WIDE

as Doc finally walks in and joins them, diving into the water. We cut higher and watch the men splashing and swimming, finally pulling back again to find ourselves....

HIGH ATOP MOUNT SURIBACHI

and drop down to reveal the flag they planted, tortured by the rain and tattered by the wind, snapping in the breeze.

FADE OUT.

The End